8.5
不問の最強!?
白銀の姫と青き騎士 第二章
健速
Takehaya

健速 たけはや

「あの日々をもういちど」（ＨＪ文庫）で作家デビュー。四月頃から始まった多忙な日々がようやく一段落。放置されていたゲームを再開した所、操作を忘れていて戸惑う今日この頃。

ポコ

兵庫出身のイラストレーター。
好物はやきそば。最近はタイ風やきそばにハマリ中。

カバーイラスト／ポコ　装丁／渡辺宏一

六畳間の侵略者!? 8.5

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た03-02-10

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六畳間の侵略者!? 8.5

ＨＪ文庫

HOBBY JAPAN

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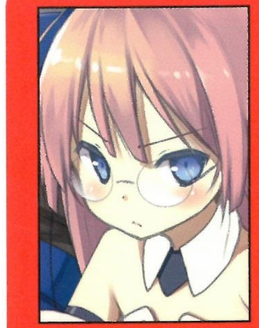

窮地を脱したアライア姫は、態勢を整えクーデター軍への反撃を開始。“殺さず”の信念で敵を次々と撃退する【青騎士】孝太郎の活躍もあり、アライア軍は徐々に勢力を拡大していく。だが、すべては周到に用意された敵の罠だった！　襲い来る最凶の竜【アルゥナイア】を前に、孝太郎は、伝説どおりの「青騎士物語」を創り上げることができるのか!?

HOBBY JAPAN

六畳間の侵略者!? 8.5

白銀の姫と青き騎士 第二章

Snow White and the First Star

立ちふさがるは
深紅の巨竜アルウナイア！

【青騎士】孝太郎
最大の戦いが
今、幕開ける!!

青騎士伝説の関係者たち

里見孝太郎（さとみこうたろう）

伝説の【青騎士】の代わりを務める(?)主人公。

クラリオーサ・ダオラ・フォルトーゼ

孝太郎と呉越同舟する、本当は皇女な侍従。愛称クラン。

アライア・クーア・フォルトーゼ

クーデターで皇都を追われたフォルトーゼの皇女。

シャルドリッサ・ダオラ・フォルトーゼ

アライアの妹で元気一杯なフォルトーゼ第二皇女。愛称シャルル。

フレアラーン・ナイ・パルドムシーハ

古くから皇家に仕えるパルドムシーハの正騎士。愛称フレア。

マルリッタ・アルセイン

皇宮付きの侍女。ゴシップ好き。愛称マリー。

ファウナ・モードラウ

アライアの元同級生で、暁の女神に仕える神官。

リディス・マクスファーン

アライアと共に戦う錬金術師。父はクーデターの首謀者。

カリス・ウェブナント

馬に化けアライア姫を監視していた魔術師。

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The Reborn Forthorthe Army

Part 1

In the northern parts of Mastir territory, close to Pardomshiha territory, lies a great plain called Raustor.

The name Raustor stood for “the goddess's resting place.” With most of Mastir consisting of mountains, there was a myth that Goddess of Dawn rested her legs here.

Since it was a plain within a mountainous region, it naturally became a transport hub. As a result, a large amount of towns that focused on trade were established, and an army to defend them was stationed there.

Because of that, the reborn Forthorthe army ended up clashing with the coup d'état army in Raustor. It was an unavoidable battle if they were to march on to the capital, Fornorn.

The reborn Forthorthe army was an army created by Alaia after she had escaped to Pardomshiha territory. The Pardomshiha family had deep ties with the royal family, and with their band of knights at the core, they amassed to a mere 500 men. There was a massive difference in the forces compared to the coup d'état army with the old imperial army at its core. The Wenranka family, who were known for their loyalty, had decided to join the newborn Forthorthe army, but the army was expected to be crushed before they could join up.

However, the Forthorthe army had overturned that situation. Although it was a siege battle with the defenders at an advantage, their first battle against the coup d'état subjugation force had ended in a victory, and that was when the Wenranka family reinforced them. The siege ended after the Forthorthe army's second win.

After their second victory, the reborn Forthorthe army's reputation began spreading like wildfire across the country. As a result, they gained a large amount of recruits and supplies.

As their force grew past 3,000 men strong, Alaia finally made up her mind. They would recapture the capital, Fornorn, and defeat Maxfern. Several months after escaping from the capital, Alaia had finally begun marching back to retake it.

And like so, the Forthorthe regular army and the coup d'état army headed towards Raustor. The regular army had 3,000 men and the coup d'état army had 4,000. The coup d'état hadn't brought all their forces here as they had left soldiers behind to guard the borders and in case of riots.

With management in disorder because of the coup d'état, an invasion from neighboring countries was likely. And having suffered under several months of tyranny, the citizens were about to explode.

Although they weren't able to bring their full force to bear, the coup d'état army was still superior in both numbers and quality. Although the regular army consisted of 3,000 men, a majority of them were untrained recruits. So in reality, their actual force would correspond to roughly 2,500.

As a result, this would be a clash of 2,500 vs. 4,000 men.

In the current state, the regular army was going to lose if their armies clashed. However, that is just in the current state.

Clan could be found in one of the tents in the regular army's encampment.

She was operating her bracelet and 3D images changed out, one after another, in front of her. They were all images of armies in formation.

Since this was Koutarou and Clan's personal tent, there was no fear of the soldiers seeing what they were doing. Clan was operating her observation device and scouting the enemy.

“How does it look?”

Koutarou who was right next to her was also looking at the feed, and Clan began explaining to Koutarou.

“It looks like they are gearing up for a field battle. They've left the fort and are taking formation in the plains.”

“Since they have the advantage in numbers, they don't need to rely on petty tricks, huh.”

“Well, it is true that we are more like an unorganized mob.”

The coup d'état army had left the fort in the town and deployed almost all of their troops onto the plains. If they had stayed holed up in the fort, their defenses would rise considerably, but they wouldn't be able to make full use of their numbers. So the coup d'état army decided to leave the fort and crush the regular army in one fell swoop. They were more likely to have less injured men by attacking with their full force, rather than awkwardly defending the fort.

“Which means if things keep going like this, it would be bad.”

“It would, indeed.”

While looking at the footage sent by the observation device, Koutarou and Clan got closer and continued their discussion. Though they were supposed to be a knight and his servant, they looked more like a general and his strategist.

“At this rate, we are almost certainly going to be destroyed.”

“No matter how strong this armor is, it's not enough to defeat several thousand men.”

Koutarou knocked on his armor.

His armor had been created with all of Forthorthe's scientific advancements, so in this age it held unparalleled strength. He would never lose to normal soldiers. However, no matter how strong he was, if all of his allies were to be defeated before he could take down all the enemies, it would be meaningless. He couldn't fight and just rely on the armor's powers.

“Armor, huh… oh right, Bertorion.”

As Clan said that, she looked at Koutarou's left arm.

“How's your left arm? Can you move it properly?”

“Hm? Yeah, no problem, I can move it just fine.”

The Reborn Forthorthe Army

Koutarou brought his left arm in front of him and repeatedly opened and closed his left hand.

During his battle with Clan, the armor around his left arm had been destroyed and he had replaced it with Kiriha's gauntlet. Clan had just recently repaired the armor and incorporated the gauntlet in it.

“Can you use your fire and electricity even with the gauntlet like that?”

“No problem, it works just fine.”

“Then that's good.”

Clan smiled satisfied and readjusted her glasses. She had a relieved expression on her face because she had been worried about Koutarou.

His defensive and offensive strength would be greatly reduced if the armor remained broken like that. And if it lost its airtightness, he would be at risk when underwater or in space.

“Your repairs are perfect, thank you, Clan.”

“…I feel like an idiot repairing something I broke myself.”

“That goes both ways. Anyways, you're a big help.”

“Ugh…”

Hearing that, Clan blushed and coughed a couple of times to hide her embarrassment before returning to the topic.

“M-More importantly, about what to do next. We can't just face them straight up. What should we do?”

“Fufu, that's where you come in, right, Clan-san?”

While Clan's face was still red, another girl in the tent called out to her.

She was Lidith Maxfern. She was Maxfern's niece, but she had parted ways with him and allied with Alaia instead.

Since she was a scholar who studied alchemy, she had outstanding understanding and as she had been serving as Clan's assistant, she understood that Koutarou and Clan were using extremely advanced technology.

“Ahem, that would be the case.”

“…We could use a decoy to lure them away from the fort, raid the defenseless fort and use it against them. By doing that, we will gain access to the weapons stored in the fort and we can reverse the difference in strength thanks to the sturdy walls.”

“Which means they will lose the supplies stored in the fort, and without any siege weaponry, they'll be forced to retreat, perhaps?”

Lidith understood what Clan was after. Clan had gotten her answer from a war support AI, and Lidith had understood what that meant before Koutarou had. On the outside, Koutarou devised the strategies, but in reality, Clan and Lidith were behind them.

“I see, that's a good idea. So how would you do it, more concretely?”

“Bertorion, tonight you will lead the soldiers and hide in the forest.”

“What about you?”

“I'll lead a decoy force and lead their main force away from the town. If I succeed, I will contact you and you will raid the fort.”

The Reborn Forthorthe Army

“Then, I'll be in charge of communication.”

“Alright, let's go with that. I'll report our plan to her highness, Alaia, you guys work on the details.”

“I understand.”

Koutarou left the tent alone. Reporting to Alaia was his job.

That's because right now, Koutarou was the commander of the reborn Forthorthe army.

Part 2

“Contact all forces; tell them that if we are found now, everything will be for naught. Proceed with caution.”

“Understood, your Excellency.”

One of the recruits saluted Koutarou. He then left Koutarou and disappeared into the dark woods. After seeing that, Koutarou began walking again. His pace was much slower than normal.

Koutarou and the others were currently marching in the night of the forest.

Koutarou was leading the march as he could see in the dark thanks to his armor. Behind him were 2,500 men. Thanks to his night vision, an accurate map and the observation device covering for them, Koutarou and the others were able to navigate through the forest at night without using any illumination.

However, people of this age had a tendency to use more light than necessary in the dark. There were a lot of anxious soldiers who wanted to light a fire, so in order to keep them calm and to keep the army together, their marching speed was slower than normal. They couldn't be too rash, as Clan would start her diversion at dawn.

Speaking of Clan; she, Flair and Caris were on the opposite side of the fort, deploying 500 men in a position where they stood out. And through Clan's technology and Caris's magic, they made the force look several times larger. Their plan would start once the coup d'état army took the bait and deployed from the fort.

“Your Excellency, may I ask a question?”

A young man who served as an adjutant whispered to Koutarou. Hearing his words, Koutarou smiled wryly.

“I don't mind, but… I keep telling you that you don't have to be so formal.”

“Ha… but your Excellency is our hope.”

The young man was a few years older than Koutarou, but he would always speak in a very respectful tone. The same was true for the entire reborn Forthorthe army.

The reason for that was because Koutarou's achievements had widely spread amongst the people of Forthorthe. Starting with his defense of the farm village that had been poisoned and attacked by a giant during its harvest festival, Koutarou had repelled Alaia's and the others pursuers and safely brought them to Pardomshiha territory. Koutarou had played a large role during that time, and before long, rumors around the name, Reios, a knight in blue armor began spreading throughout the kingdom.

“Hah…”

However, Koutarou himself was perplexed by this situation.

Originally, he was only supposed to be acting as a replacement until the real Blue Knight was found. However, they ended up reaching Pardomshiha territory without ever finding him. And now they had taken to the offensive. Koutarou's achievements were supposed to be the Blue Knight's. And since he had practically stolen those, his feelings were quite complex.

What made it worse was that Koutarou himself didn't really have any power of his own to speak off. He had gotten his ability to see auras from Sanae, he had gotten his armor from Theia and his gauntlet that could create electricity and fire was from Kiriha. And while he was unaware of it, he was also being protected by Yurika's magic. They were all powers given to him by others. Because of that, Koutarou wasn't able to take pride in others showing him respect and only felt bad.

“…So, what did you want to ask me?”

However, nothing would come from worrying about that. He couldn't tell everyone the truth, nor could he rely on just his own power to fight. As he changed gears, Koutarou urged the young adjutant to continue.

“Then I will ask… Your Excellency, why do you not kill your enemies?”

The young man's question was regarding his doubts about Koutarou's way of fighting.

Even on the battlefield, Koutarou didn't kill anyone. Instead, he used the powers of the armor and gauntlet to knock his enemies out or injure them enough to incapacitate them. In this age, that was only seen as making it harder for oneself.

“They're not the enemy.”

This wasn't the first time Koutarou had been asked this type of question. Clan and Flair had asked the same thing, so Koutarou answered without hesitation.

“Huh?”

Koutarou's answer was the same as the Blue Knight's line in the play. In the play, the Blue Knight didn't kill his enemies either, and there was even a scene regarding that in the manuscript.

“They are not the enemy. They are all citizens of Forthorthe. Her highness Alaia would mourn the loss of the life of any Forthorthe citizen, regardless of the reason.”

Koutarou had used the same line from the play, but in reality, he felt the same way. He didn't want to make Alaia, or Theia who was in a faraway place, sad.

“And just between us, there's a strategic meaning behind it too.”

“A strategic meaning, is it?”

“Yeah. If we injure or knock them out, it would take more than one soldier to carry them home. In other words, by not killing them we're reducing their force even more.”

This was a modern strategy Koutarou had learned from Clan.

By killing an enemy, their forces are reduced by the number of men slain. However, by merely incapacitating them, more men would be required to carry them in a retreat. So by hurting one, it's possible to reduce their numbers by more than two soldiers. Even in modern wars, weapons like landmines are often designed to injure rather than kill to increase the burden on the opposing force. It was a very clever strategy.

“That might be true… but, there's no point in that if your Excellency puts himself in danger!”

What worried the young adjutant was that Koutarou would often end up in dangerous situations.

There were plenty of soldiers who faked being incapacitated, and Koutarou had been attacked by several soldiers doing just that. Fortunately, thanks to the power of the armor he had been safe, but the adjutant was always on edge. He didn't want to lose their symbol of hope over something like that. In order to avoid that, the adjutant would rather the enemies be killed.

“There's no need to worry. I made an oath to her highness, Alaia, that I would protect her without fail. And in order to fulfill that oath, I will never die.”

“…Excuse me, your Excellency.”

“No, it's okay.”

An oath was the most important thing to a knight. Once Koutarou brought that up, the adjutant had no room left to argue. However, that was more like using the oath as a shield to ward of any rebuttal. It was hardly an answer.

I'm sorry, here you are all worried about me too…

So while smiling wryly, Koutarou apologized to the young man on the inside.

Part 3

The capital, Fornorn, was a large city, though obviously small compared to modern cities of today. However, it was one of the largest cities existing in this age. That served as proof that Forthorthe was a powerful country and that the royalty protecting the city through the generations were wise.

However, right now, there was not a single royalty left in the capital. There was indeed a palace in the center of the city, but, the man sitting on the throne was not the emperor.

Biorbaram Maxfern.

He was a member of the Maxfern family, famous for its many scholars and politicians, and he himself once served the emperor as a minister. However, he had assassinated the emperor and started a coup d'état because of his own ambitions.

“So Raustor has fallen, huh…”

A man's voice echoed in the throne room.

Despite being middle aged, his voice was still powerful. He also had a muscular body to match his voice. That was Maxfern.

“That was faster than expected.”

Maxfern had his elbows planted on the throne, with his hands clasped together as he thought.

“Yes. I thought it would take a little more time, but it seems like they possess more power than expected.”

The man who answered him was an elderly tall man with grey hair. It was obvious that he was a slim man, even though he was wearing a robe. He had the opposite impression that of Maxfern.

The head of the court magicians, Grevanas.

He stood at the top of the magicians of Forthorthe and had served the royal family since the previous emperor. He was the strongest magician in the country, and was one of the seven arc-wizards. However, along with Maxfern, he had incited a coup d'état and betrayed the country.

“It seems that they fell for a feint in front of the fort, and when they deployed all of their forces the fort was attacked from behind.”

“That was quite a strategy from Alaia. She looked like she couldn't harm a fly, but she's come a long way…”

Just a moment ago, Grevanas had gotten a report from one of his subordinates. The contents of the report was that the town of Raustor and the fort had fallen to the reborn Forthorthe army.

Though despite hearing that, neither Maxfern or Grevanas seemed disappointed. If anything, it was seemingly the opposite; it was as if they were welcoming Alaia's success.

“And it seems like the rumor of a powerful knight joining Alaia is true.”

“That Blue Knight was it…?”

“Yes. It seems he played a big part in this as well. Apart from planning the feint, he also entered the castle on his own and opened the gates from the inside.”

“Oh… then our forces never stood a chance.”

“Yes. It seems the fort was conquered in mere moments. Our forces lost their base of operation and retreated.”

“Hahahaha, splendid, very well done Alaia, and that Blue Knight!”

Maxfern burst out laughing and praised Alaia and Koutarou. He didn't seem to care that he had lost a vital base without much of a fight and allowed the enemy to advance further south.

“There was no damage to the town, and almost no deaths. As a result, the reborn Forthorthe army's reputation is skyrocketing.”

“That would be the case. It's a story the people would love.”

Maxfern had nodded as he listened to Grevanas, but suddenly he narrowed his eyes and showed a more serious expression.

“…Grevanas, if they are able to produce such results, it must mean that Alaia has broken the seal on the royal family national treasure, right?”

“Well… it seems they have been winning repeatedly without the help of the holy sword.”

“What!?”

Maxfern was astonished and he slammed his elbows into the throne and stood up. All of his confidence from before had vanished.

“Is that true!? You are certain of this!?”

“Yes. The seal at the temple of the Goddess of Dawn is still intact. And there are no signs of the sword being removed. My subordinates at the location have confirmed it.”

While listening to Grevanas's report, Maxfern slowly sat back down on the throne.

“To think… to think that Alaia is winning this well without using the holy sword from the temple… it's hard to believe…”

“But it's the truth. They defeated the Diabolic Soldier and are repeatedly winning despite the difference in forces, all that without the help of the sword.”

“It seems things have gotten quite complicated…”

Maxfern sighed loudly and his expression turned bitter. Alaia's forces was putting up an unexpectedly good fight, and Maxfern was both surprised and depressed.

“It looks like that Blue Knight is better than I thought.”

Grevanas still looked the same, but his tone of voice sounded more bitter.

“Which means that we'll have to change our approach too.”

“I believe it is as you say. With this victory, I believe support for Alaia's cause will rise. Supporters are already appearing in our own ranks. I believe it is well within the realm of possibility that they will muster an army that can rival ours.”

“If that happens, our wish will never come true. I wonder how we can stimulate Alaia's sense of danger in our current situation…”

Grevanas and Maxfern began planning their next step. However, for some reason, it wasn't a plan for how to deal with the reborn Forthorthe army, but rather a plan to individually corner Alaia.

Oath and Insignia of Rank

Part 1

Charl's golden hair swung as she ran.

“Blue Knight! Where are you!? Show yourself!”

She shouted out as she ran through crowds of confused people. Compared to the people around her, she was extremely short so she couldn't see ahead of her. The only thing she could do was shout as she continued looking.

She was in the fort located at the town of Raustor. Just a while ago this had been a base for the coup d'état army, but it was now under the control of the reborn Forthorthe army. They had successfully driven the coup d'état army out of this fort just yesterday.

Because of that there were a lot of people in the fort. When thinking of a fort, one would imagine lots of knights and soldiers, but that wasn't quite right. When a military force was on the move, they needed a similar number of men to carry supplies. Since neither trucks nor aircraft existed in this age, that was inevitable. Thanks to that, there were a lot of civilian volunteers helping to support the army, and traders, providing the actual supplies filling up the fort.

Their expressions were all bright, their morale was high, and they all had a strong will to retake their home country.

The coup d'état had begun with the assassination of the emperor and empress. From there, the country's economic situation and public order began deteriorating. The citizens’ lives turned for the worse over just a few months. However, thanks to repeated victories of the reborn Forthorthe army, the citizens felt like the winds were turning. As a result, a lot of people began joining the army and decided to solve this national crisis by gathering their power.

In the minds of the people, something that might be called a hope existed. That hope was a single young knight.

He was peerless on the battlefield, but he never got full of himself and even showed mercy to his enemies. He was the model image of how a knight should be, and a loyal subject who protected princess Alaia. When people called his name, they made sure to show respect, as they said 'Forthorthe's Blue Knight, Reios Fatra Bertorion.’

Princess Charl was able to find that Blue Knight in the soldiers training area next to the ramparts of the fort.

“Your highness, if you're looking for Reios-sama, I saw him by the training area.”

“Oh! You're right! Blue Knight is hiding all the way over there!”

“Fufu, I don't think he's hiding… It looks like he's training with the new recruits.”

“Mary, good work, allow me to praise you!”

“Aha, it's my honor, your highness.”

After hearing of his whereabouts from Mary, Charl ran towards the training area. The people made way for Charl to pass through. As she ran past, they couldn’t help but stare at her back and smile. The sight of a cheerful child had the power to cheer people up in any age.

“Blue Knight!”

Charl shouted the name out loud. But it seemed like her voice didn't reach all the way to the person she shouted at, as he didn't notice Charl's existence. He was currently sparring with Flair, a female knight Charl knew very well.

Oath and Insignia of Rank

“Bertorion, your sword handling is too beautiful. I think it would be harder to read you if you drop your shoulders a little.”

“My teacher was very strict about that… so it's quite hard to break the habit.”

Since Flair was from the Pardomshiha family, which was famous for creating splendid knights for countless generations, she was an expert when it came to swords. In order to make up for her physique, she used a thin sword and swiftly struck at her enemy's weak points. Her attacks were sharp and fast.

However, her attacks didn't reach the knight in blue armor. He was wearing a thick full plate armor and using a large, traditional knight sword while she was wearing light armor and using a thin sword. Despite the large difference in mobility, the knight in blue armor evaded her attacks at the last moment. On top of that, they had been at it for several minutes already. The knight in blue armor must have an absurd amount of stamina and skill with the sword. Of course, the same could be said for Flair, as she hadn't taken a single attack yet either.

“Blue Knight!”

However, when Charl called his name again, the fight finally ended.

“Your highness?”

The knight who had been called noticed Charl's existence and turned towards her.

“You're wide open!”

That was when Flair's sword approached, however, her sword stopped just before reaching the knights throat. If it continued any further it would have pierced right through.

“…That's why I keep telling you that you're too honest, Bertorion.”

“Well done, Lord Flairhan.”

Flair smiled wryly as she returned her sword to its sheath. As she did, the soldiers who had been watching the two erupted. Some rejoiced in Flair's victory, while others were bitter and some praised their good fight. Having witnessed their commanders’ skills up close, their excitement was at its peak.

“B-Blue Knight! Ah, ooohh! Hee~y!”

Charl forced her way through the excited soldiers and appeared in the training area. She had lost her balance as she was being pushed around by the soldiers, but she cheerfully began running once more as she spotted the knight in blue armor.

“I finally found you, Blue Knight! You've put me through some trouble!”

Having finally found the person she was looking for after searching all over the fort, Charl's smile at that time was so bright it looked like it was shining.

Koutarou squatted and they stared at each other. As they did, Charl suddenly dashed forward like a bullet.

“Blue Knight!”

“Your high—ness!?”

Oath and Insignia of Rank

As she got just in front of Koutarou, she kicked off the ground and jumped forward. That was her way of expressing her love.

Koutarou caught her tiny body mid-air. Since Charl didn't care that Koutarou was wearing his armor all the time, if he didn't stop her like that, she would crash right into the plate. Thanks to the power of the armor and his ability to see auras, he managed to avoid getting Charl hurt, but it was a nerve racking experience every time.

“…Your highness, I keep telling you. You should come over more slowly or you will get hurt.”

“Blue Knight… does that mean you don't want to catch me anymore?”

Having been warned by Koutarou, Charl looked up at him with a very sad expression on her face. Seeing her sad eyes from up close, Koutarou felt like he was the one doing something bad.

“That's not it, but—”

“Then isn't it alright. I will jump and you will catch me. Where is the problem in that?”

“No, that's not it at all.”

This kind of discussion had been repeated several times, and it always ended with Koutarou backing down. In the end, Koutarou was unable to reject Charl's straight and earnest feelings.

“More importantly—”

And this time ended up with Koutarou's loss once again. Charl dismissed the entire discussion with her 'more importantly,’ and jumped down to the ground. She then pulled out something and presented it to Koutarou with both hands.

“Blue Knight, I will present you with this.”

Inside her hands was a small ornament. It was a piece of rectangular wood with a belt of wool around it.

“Your highness, what is this?”

Flair peeked into Charl's hands from beside Koutarou and asked what it was with a smile on her face. In response, Charl proudly puffed up her chest.

“This is an insignia of rank that sister and I made.”

“An insignia of rank you say?”

Having been told what the ornament was, Koutarou stared at the wooden piece. On it was something written with ink.

Since Koutarou couldn't read Forthorthe, he tilted his head and the armor began translating the characters on the wooden piece for him.

“Insignia of Forthorthe's Blue Knight, Super Important Bodyguard for Charl and Alaia.”

One could tell it had been written by a child at first glance, but Koutarou understood that they had been written with great care. A colorful, knit wool ribbon decorated the wooden piece. While that too was simple, Koutarou knew that it had been made by Alaia.

“Sister and I present you with this as thanks for your contribution.”

Charl and Alaia had worked together to make this insignia after Charl had asked for it. After staring at the insignia for a while, Koutarou realized that and smiled at her.

“Thank you very much, princess Charl. Please give princess Alaia my thanks as well.”

“You can do that yourself later, Blue Knight.”

Oath and Insignia of Rank

Seeing Koutarou's smile, Charl's proud expression turned into a cheerful smile. She then reached her hand up towards Koutarou's chest and attached the insignia.

“There. Feel pride in it for a long time, Blue Knight.”

“I will make it an heirloom, your highness.”

“Good!”

Charl was an innocent yet clever girl, so she knew that it wasn't guaranteed that Koutarou would be pleased with the insignia. But she couldn't come up with another way to show her gratitude. So she had presented it to Koutarou while feeling a little anxious. Fortunately, Koutarou liked the homemade insignia and as a result, Charl's smile was brighter than normal.

“Alright, then let's go.”

Satisfied, Charl climbed up on Koutarou's back as he was still squatting down. And after securing her body on top of his, she lightly tapped on Koutarou's shoulder twice.

“You can stand.”

“I understand… but where to now?”

Koutarou held onto Charl and stood up. Charl pointed towards a building in the center of the fort. It was a large and solid building made out of bricks. It was a vital building of the fort that served as the headquarters and barracks.

“Like I said. Tell sister your thanks directly.”

“So, to princess Alaia?”

“Yes, sister needs you. And I had some business with you too, so I came calling for you.”

As Charl said that she wrapped her arms around Koutarou's neck and held on tight.

“I see.”

Koutarou understood the circumstances. Alaia had some business with Koutarou, so on top of giving Koutarou the insignia of rank, Charl sent him to Alaia.

“Good. So as you can see, Flair, I shall be borrowing Blue Knight.”

“Okay. Bertorion, take care of her highness.”

“Understood.”

“What's talking you so long? Let's go.”

“Y-Yes, right away.”

Koutarou was rushed by Charl and he left the training area. And so, Flair and Mary were left behind in the middle of the training area.

“Come on, hurry! Sister is waiting for you!”

“I understand, so please stay still! Ah, look out!”

Koutarou ran towards the center of the fort with Charl on his back. The two remaining girls stared at them as they continued their lively discussion.

After Koutarou and Charl had vanished, Flair smiled wryly and mumbled.

“…And to think he's a peerless knight on the battlefield. The world is full of mysteries.”

As Flair stared at the two, she had almost forgotten that Koutarou was a knight who played a big part in their victories. Flair's instincts told her that he didn't possess the atmosphere of a knight.

Oath and Insignia of Rank

She couldn't help but feel perplexed as when Koutarou was together with Charl, he didn't look like an impressive knight at all, despite the truth that he was.

Meanwhile, Mary who was next to Flair had a slightly different opinion. After Koutarou and Charl vanished, she looked over at Flair and smiled.

“But, isn't that why we are winning?”

“What do you mean?”

Flair looked at Mary; she couldn't understand the meaning of Mary's words. She believed the opposite of them to be true.

“If Reios-sama just went around slaughtering the enemy, we wouldn't have this many allies, and we might not have continued winning…”

Koutarou didn't kill people. It could be that people died as a result, but he hadn't killed a single person that had tried to kill him. And since they still won, everyone praised and imitated Koutarou. Therefore, the reborn Forthorthe army tried not to kill too many of their enemies.

Since they didn't kill people for no reason, the reborn Forthorthe army didn't become an object of hatred, and there were plenty of people who switched sides to join them. Regardless of justice, nobody would want to cooperate with someone who would kill their family in cold blood.

As a result, as a peculiar knight in this age, Koutarou's very existence led the Forthorthe army from victory to victory.

“That might be true. No matter how strong you are on your own, it's not much help in a war…”

Flair nodded. She felt like it might be just as Mary said.

If Koutarou did the opposite of what he did and he just killed all of his enemies, the reborn Forthorthe army might have been suppressed by now. Even if he could kill hundreds on his own, he couldn't beat the coup d'état army alone. Without the cooperation of the people, he wouldn't be able to protect Alaia and Charl. He would just become an object of fear and would eventually die, without finding any allies or supplies as he marched on.

It might be effective to kill as many enemies as possible in the short-term, but that overwhelming force might become a problem later on. That could be seen in Earth's history as well. The Roman empire was one such example. All the nations that had slaughtered all of their enemies with overwhelming force to expand had eventually perished.

Though it was an afterthought, Alaia and the others could consider themselves lucky that Koutarou hadn't done so.

Part 2

It was much warmer inside the building than outside. The solid bricks trapped the warmth and blocked the cold winds at the same time.

“Blue Knight, sister is waiting in her own room.”

“I understand.”

After closing the door, Koutarou headed towards Alaia's room with Charl on his back.

A metallic sound rang out for every step Koutarou took. The sound rang out in the wide entrance, the long stairs leading up to the third floor and the winding passage before stopping.

In front of him now was a large door. This room was originally used as the headquarters by the commander of the fort. The reborn Forthorthe army did the same, and the commander-in-chief, Alaia, was currently using it. Koutarou had visited this room several times both today and yesterday.

Before Koutarou could knock on the door, it opened from the inside. Several government officials carrying a bunch of documents came jumping out.

“Your Excellency!? How very nice to meet you!”

“Lord Bertorion! We are in a hurry, so please excuse us!”

When they noticed Koutarou they hurriedly stood up straight, but that only lasted for a moment as they soon began running.

“They seem awfully busy.”

“Yes. Sister has been working non-stop too.”

Koutarou turned away from the government officials and peeked past the door. Inside, he saw Alaia at a desk on the far end of the room, surrounded by heaps of documents.

“Don't just stand there and stare, get in. I told you that sister needs you.”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Koutarou smiled at Charl and knocked on the door a couple of times. Although the door was already open, he felt he should at least knock before entering.

“…You're so formal.”

“We didn't come here to play.”

“We did.”

“You jester.”

“Yes, who is— Reios-sama!?”

After checking the documents, Alaia looked up. When she saw Koutarou and Charl by the door her eyes opened wide in surprise.

“Princess Alaia, I am here to respond to your summons.”

“Eh? But I don't recall calling for Reios-sama…?”

Alaia blinked repeatedly with a confused look on her face. That response confused Koutarou in turn.

“But… princess Charl came calling for me, saying that you had asked for me.”

“Charl did?”

Koutarou and Alaia turned towards Charl, still on Koutarou's back. As they did, Charl shut the door behind them, while smiling.

“I never said that sister was calling for you.”

“But…”

“I merely said that sister needs you. You just misunderstood that on your own.”

In other words, Charl had tricked Koutarou into coming here. She had a big smile on her face as if to say that she got him.

“Charl, Reios-sama is very busy, you know?”

“That's why, sister!”

Despite being warned by Alaia, Charl showed no signs of listening to her sister and cheerfully smiled at the two.

“All sister and Blue Knight ever do is work. You were more relaxed when you were running away from the army! If you don't rest a little you will get sick again!”

However, her appeal was serious. Charl clenched her hands into fists and looked at Koutarou and Alaia with a serious expression.

“Charl…”

Alaia was planning on lightly scolding Charl, but after hearing her reason her expression loosened up. She couldn't bring herself to scold Charl for thinking of her and Koutarou.

So that's why… Now that I think about it, she did mention something about coming here to play…

Like Alaia, Koutarou felt content after learning of Charl's intentions, and at the same time he felt her consideration was very unlike that of a child. When he thought back to the time when he was a child, he couldn't imagine himself doing the same.

“Come on, don't just stand there, go to sister.”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Koutarou readjusted Charl and approached Alaia.

He wanted to respect the young, gentle girl's straight and earnest feelings, and it did indeed look like Alaia was feeling fatigued. Koutarou believed she could use a break.

“Reios-sama… would that be alright?”

However, Alaia didn't feel the same way. She had an apologetic expression, as she was worried that her little sister was taking up Koutarou's precious time.

“I don't mind. This is part of a bodyguard's duty as well.”

As Koutarou said that, he pointed towards his chest. There, an insignia of rank made from wood and wool shook.

“Insignia of Forthorthe's Blue Knight, Super Important Bodyguard for Charl and Alaia.”

It was the handmade insignia Charl had made. Charl had also pestered Alaia to help her make it.

“Reios-sama…”

Seeing that hanging off Koutarou's chest, a warm sensation spread through Alaia's body.

Oath and Insignia of Rank

An insignia made from wood and wool was just child's play in the end. Although it might have been from royalty, not many knights would rejoice at being given such a malformed insignia. Alaia was happy that Koutarou was one of those few knights.

“…Then let's take a little break.”

Alaia began to feel like it was important to spend some time together with Koutarou and Charl.

“As Charl said, it might be more tiring now than when we were escaping from our pursuers.”

“Sister! See, Blue Knight! It's just like I said, right!?”

“Very impressive insight, princess Charl.”

“Fufun, you may praise me more, my knight.”

“We don't stand a chance against Charl… fufufu…”

If she had noticed the insignia when she was alone with Koutarou, she probably would have blurted out something unbelievable.

That was what went through Alaia’s mind while Koutarou and Charl were preparing some tea.

Part 3

Charl had been speaking for the majority of Koutarou, Alaia and Charl's tea time.

“…And then, Mary stopped me, saying that it would be dangerous to ride such a large horse. Then I told her, what horse should I ride then? There were no other horses smaller than that. Isn't that rude?”

Charl chatted on about all kinds of things. Funny events, sad events, recent events, what she was going to do later and the likes. She spoke while excessively gesturing with her hands.

“Charl, you're still too young to ride a horse.”

“Your highness, please settle for a pony.”

“Blue Knight, is that an insult?”

“I wouldn't dare to insult your highness.”

“Then, let me ride a horse next time. If you do then I'll forgive you.”

“As you wish, my princess.”

“Good.”

“Fufu…”

Koutarou and Alaia would listen to her while responding from time to time. Her stories weren't very important, but that allowed for Koutarou and Alaia to rest.

That continued for about an hour or so. After bringing up everything on her mind, Charl nodded off on top of Koutarou's lap satisfied. She completely entrusted her body to Koutarou and fell asleep with a relieved expression.

“…It looks like she fell asleep.”

Noticing that Charl was sleeping, Koutarou stood up and carried her to a sofa in a corner of the room. After Koutarou laid her down to rest, Alaia covered her body with a blanket.

“…Thank you, Reios-sama.”

After placing Charl's arm which had been sticking out under the blanket, she stood up and looked at Koutarou. She looked at him as if they were family, her eyes were filled with a deep trust and love.

“…No, this is nothing.”

Koutarou was almost sucked in by those eyes, but he soon remembered his duty. After taking a look towards the door, he whispered to Alaia in order to not wake up Charl.

“…Well then, your highness, this is a good time for me to leave.”

They had rested long enough. They best return to their jobs. Both Koutarou and Alaia had lots of things to do. Alaia knew that as well, but she chose to do the opposite.

“…Reios-sama, can I have some more of your time?”

“…I don't mind, but…”

“…Then this way.”

“…Okay.”

Following Alaia's lead, Koutarou returned to the table with the tea set on it. The two of them sat down facing each other. Since this was a bit further from the sofa, they should be able to speak

without worrying about waking Charl up. After looking towards Charl one more time, Koutarou turned to Alaia.

“She sure is fast asleep.”

“Charl is only able to sleep like that when she is by your side, Reios-sama.”

Alaia glanced at Charl at the same time as Koutarou. However, by the time Alaia turned back to Koutarou, she had a sad expression on her face.

“I'm sure… that Reios-sama reminds her of father. She's depending on you just like she did with him. Although she would never tell me out of concern for me, I'm sure she is lonely too.”

She's lonely too, huh… That's only obvious, isn't it…

Koutarou noticed the hidden meaning behind Alaia's words. Alaia was also grieving the loss of her parents.

I'm powerless. I really can't do anything…

Koutarou had no power of his own. At first glance it looked like Koutarou might be helping Alaia and the others, but in reality, what was helping them was just borrowed powers. On top of that, he couldn't console Alaia and Charl as they grieved. Having lived peacefully for his entire life, Koutarou couldn't find any words that would console the girls whose parents had been murdered.

Koutarou himself was practically useless. He couldn't be of help to Alaia or Charl, and that frustrated and saddened Koutarou.

“So, Reios-sama.”

As Koutarou was deep in thought, Alaia's words brought him back to reality.

“After this war ends, I want you to continue to help us.”

Alaia had stopped Koutarou because she wanted to say that. She couldn't tell him if they weren't alone.

“Your highness…”

Koutarou was puzzled by Alaia's words. He knew better than anyone that he was powerless. And Koutarou had a place he had to return to, things he had to do.

“I won't be of much help. I'm sure you're already aware of that, your highness.”

Koutarou was convinced that somewhere through their journey, this intelligent girl had noticed that he didn't have any power.

“Reios-sama…”

And that was the truth. Having seen the way Koutarou fought, and the weapons Clan used, she had understood that something like that might have been the case. The fact that Alaia didn't object allowed Koutarou to understand that.

“I'm not strong. It's only thanks to the power of many that I can fight. But even that power has its limits. Eventually, I will lose these powers and return to being a weak human. Once that happens, I will only get in your highness's way.”

The ability to manipulate spiritual energy that Sanae had given to him was gradually growing weaker. Sanae had created routes in Koutarou's body in order for him to use that power, but having separated from her, the powers gradually weakened.

And it wasn't like Theia's armor would work for all eternity. There was nowhere in this age where they could find parts to repair it. Clan was doing her best with the material she had at hand, but eventually she would use up all of that and be unable to continue her maintenance on the armor.

The same was true for the gauntlet from Kiriha and the magic from Yurika. Before too long he would reach his limit. Koutarou wouldn't be able to remain at his current strength for too much longer.

That's why Koutarou believed he eventually had to part with Alaia and the others, just like the real Blue Knight. The very premise that his power worked on was dangerous, and he didn't want it to become a seed of conflict. Since he himself wasn't strong, he didn't have any other option.

“Reios-sama, it doesn't matter to Charl if you are strong or not. She adores you because of who you are.”

Alaia responded, having understood all of that.

Charl wasn't so attached to Koutarou because of his strength. She simply loved Koutarou, that's why she gave him the insignia.

“And she adores you because you still have that insignia on your chest.”

The insignia of rank was still attached to Koutarou's chest. Charl adored Koutarou because he was like that, because she knew that he understood her feelings.

“The same is true for me too. If I hadn't met you, I probably wouldn't be able to talk and smile like this.”

Alaia had a similar frame of mind to Charl. Regardless of Koutarou's strength, his moral support was far more important. There had been several times where Alaia had been discouraged. But every time that had happened, Koutarou's words, his existence, they had supported her. So a knight that was simply strong wouldn't have been able to protect Alaia. It was only possible because of who Koutarou was.

“Please be more confident in yourself. Reios-sama, if you uphold your oath as a normal human, then you are a knight we can put our trust in for all eternity.”

The sword was a knight's soul. However, the oath sworn on that sword was more important than the sword itself. So based on that, Koutarou was without a doubt the strongest knight in Forthorthe to Alaia.

“Your highness… those words are too much for myself.”

Having understood Alaia's feelings, Koutarou was so happy he could cry. What Alaia and Charl needed wasn't his power, but himself. Those words saved Koutarou as he grieved his lack of power.

“Your highness, I will forever take pride in those words.”

“Then—”

Alaia's expression brightened and she gently stood up. To her, whether or not Koutarou would always be by her side was a very important question.

“No, your highness. I can't do that.”

However, Koutarou simply shook his head. That was all he could answer.

“R-Reios-sama…?”

Alaia fell back down on the chair, her eyes wide open. Her moist eyes questioned why Koutarou wouldn't stay by her side.

“I have a place I must return too. And there I have a promise, no, an oath I must fulfill.”

“An oath…”

Oath and Insignia of Rank

The strongest knight, the knight Alaia and Charl yearned for, was a knight that always did their best to fulfill their oath. Because of that, Koutarou had to return.

Koutarou had made a lot of promises and oaths. He had decided that he would make Theia's trial succeed. He had promised Kiriha that they would look for the person she loved together. He was planning on graduating from high school together with Yurika. He couldn't let Sanae be alone. And he had shared an oath with the invading girls, Harumi and the drama club; that they would make the play a success.

Because of those many promises and oaths, Koutarou couldn't remain here. If Alaia and Charl yearned for the strongest knight, if Koutarou was to be the strongest knight, he had to return to the invaders.

“I, see…”

Strength left Alaia's body and she leaned her body on the chair. Her great disappointment was apparent.

However, Alaia understood the meaning of what Koutarou was saying. His actions were consistent with what they had always been. That's why Alaia loved Koutarou. And the part she loved the most was the reason he would leave. So Alaia couldn't stop him.

“I am sorry, princess Alaia.”

“It's okay. That's just who you are, Reios-sama…”

Alaia desperately kept herself from crying and smiled at Koutarou. She definitely didn't want to become a burden for him.

“In… in exchange, please tell me something.”

Alaia held back her sadness and love for Koutarou. However, the feelings she was unable suppress left her in the form of a question.

“Anything you ask.”

Koutarou was planning on truthfully answering anything he was asked. He didn't want to lie to Alaia. Perhaps, that could be called loyalty.

“Please forgive me for repeating a question I've asked before.”

Alaia stared straight at Koutarou and asked.

“That royal crest engraved on your chestplate. Your appearance and your behavior, and that noble prideful heart. You are without a doubt a true knight of Forthorthe.”

“Princess Alaia…”

They were the words Alaia had asked him when they first met. It had been several months since that day, but Koutarou could clearly remember those words. It was an event that had left a very deep impression on him.

“But… but I have no recollection of the crest on your sword. Just where have you come from?”

Alaia wanted to know where Koutarou came from, and where is he going. If he wouldn't stay by her side, then she at least wanted to know where he would go.

“I—”

Koutarou was hesitant. But it wasn't because he was wondering if he should tell her the truth or not. It was because he was thinking of how he would tell her without letting her misunderstand. After thinking for a moment, he looked out the window and up at the sky.

“I came from the other side of that sky… the world of stars…”

Oath and Insignia of Rank

Through the window he could see the crimson evening sky, and the first star shining. That wasn't earth, but Koutarou and Alaia's glances were drawn there.

“…the world… of stars…”

That was what Alaia suspected might be the case. Every time Koutarou looked up into the sky, he would show a very nostalgic expression. But even though she had believed that might be the case, she was still very surprised when she had heard it.

“And.”

Koutarou removed the sheath and sword from his waist and showed the crest on the handle to Alaia. On it, a golden flower was engraved.

“This sword was given to me by princess Theiamillis Gre Mastir Sagurada Von Forthorthe. The crest on the handle isn't a family crest, but princess Theiamillis’s personal crest.”

“Mastir…?”

Alaia's expression changed, part of the name Koutarou spoke confused her.

“That's not… There is no one by the name of Theiamillis in this Mastir family.”

Currently, there were only two people of the Mastir family alive, Alaia and Charl. And since this was before the royal families had split, Alaia and Charl were the only two of royal blood. So the seventh royal princess from the Mastir family, Theiamillis, shouldn't exist.

“But there is. Though, 2,000 years from now…”

“2,000… years…?”

The unexpected words from Koutarou's mouth left Alaia surprised once more. If she accepted that a royal princess called Theiamillis existed 2,000 years from now, it would mean that she would accept another major problem. And with Alaia's common sense, that was unthinkable.

“That's right, princess Alaia. I came from 2,000 years into the future.”

However, Koutarou spoke of what Alaia believed was impossible as fact.

Oath and Insignia of Rank

Part 4

After that, Koutarou told Alaia everything. All the details on how he got here, without hiding anything. He believed that Alaia deserved that sincerity.

He told her how he met with Theia, how after fighting they began to live together, and eventually cooperate. He told her how during his fight with Clan, they had been thrown to this time and place by accident. He told her how he had gotten in the way of her meeting with the Blue Knight and how he acted as a replacement while working together with Clan.

Koutarou managed to convey his story to Alaia, despite its hardships. He himself didn't have that good of an idea of what had happened, and Alaia had next to no knowledge of science. By the time he had finished conveying everything to Alaia, it had already become night.

“That's why… I'm not even a real knight. I'm just a normal student, without any special powers. I'm not even a noble, but just a commoner.”

To finish his story off, Koutarou revealed his identity. That he had no powers of his own, and that he simply borrowed the power from others. That was a harsh reality for him to face. He had to confess to the person he respected the most that he was just a worthless man. But Koutarou was happy at the same time. With this, he no longer had to lie to Alaia.

“You are wrong.”

However, Alaia smiled wryly and shook her head.

“You are without a doubt a knight. The feelings that Theiamillis poured into that sword and armor are real. Since we're both princesses, I can tell as much.”

Alaia was confident, even though she hadn't met this girl called Theiamillis, but since they were both princesses she could understand the feelings put into the sword and armor. She probably trusted Koutarou as much as Alaia, and possibly loved him just as much. Alaia believed that the golden flower crest on the handle of the sword and the title of Theiamillis's Blue Knight engraved into his chestplate proved that.

“Just what kind of princess would lend a sword that had been created for her at birth to an unimportant man? If you were truly so unimportant, she would just have given you one of those swords lying around.”

“But—”

“And even if that wasn't the case…”

Alaia held her hands in front of her chest and smiled at Koutarou. That smile was so beautiful that Koutarou forgot what he was about to say.

“I and Charl appointed you under the name of the Forthorthe royal family.”

Alaia pointed towards the insignia on Koutarou's chest.

“That you are Forthorthe's Blue Knight.”

The insignia on Koutarou's chest had been made by Charl and Alaia, and though it looked like a toy, it had the following words written on it.

“Insignia of Forthorthe's Blue Knight, Super Important Bodyguard for Charl and Alaia.”

While that was on his chest, even if he was just a commoner, Koutarou was a true knight, acknowledged by Alaia and Charl.

“Please take pride. You are a true knight, acknowledged by four of Forthorthe's princesses.”

Alaia, Charl, Theia and Clan.

Oath and Insignia of Rank

Those four princesses acknowledged Koutarou as a knight. Even in Forthorthe's whole history, that was an unusual event.

“I wonder about Clan…”

Koutarou smiled as he gave up. If he was declared a knight by a princess like Alaia, he had no choice but to accept it. The insignia of rank he had been given by Alaia and Charl still hung off his chest. The only one he was uncertain of was Clan.

“Clan-sama acknowledges you as well. I can tell.”

Alaia recalled when Koutarou and Clan were fighting the steel giant. Back then Clan had said such.

“This is a royal decree. As a knight of Forthorthe, fulfill your duty!”

She was far away and had a hard time hearing it, but she certainly remembered those words. They were words that never would have been spoken if Clan didn't acknowledge Koutarou as a knight.

“…Your highness…”

Koutarou truly felt happy that someone of Alaia's caliber had placed such deep trust in him. The only thing that bothered him was that he was the Blue Knight's substitute. If he hadn't been a substitute, he might have burst into a little dance.

“But, that's true… if you have made promises and oaths with everyone in your hometown… then you have to return home.”

Alaia herself was also happy. She felt like Koutarou had revealed everything to her because he acknowledged her as his true lord. She wasn't able to keep Koutarou by her side, but that made her happy.

“…You believe such an extraordinary story, your highness?”

Koutarou couldn't help but be perplexed. He didn't think that she would believe that he had come through the stars and through time.

“A princess who doesn't believe the knight she appointed herself is hardly fit to rule a country.”

However, Alaia could only believe in him. If it wasn't for Koutarou, she might not have gotten this far. So she would believe anything he said, even if that had been that the sun would suddenly vanish tomorrow.

“…Your words are too much for me.”

If she put this much trust in him, there was nothing else he could do. Regardless of if he was the real thing or a fake, he resolved himself again to protect Alaia from Maxfern.

“Just… can you tell me one last thing, Reios—”

Alaia was about to ask Koutarou her last question, but then she remembered that she had one more question to ask. Alaia smiled and decided to pose that question first.

“Before that, sir knight, please let me hear your name?”

Once again, they were words that Alaia had spoken when they first met.

Koutarou had told Alaia that he wasn't the real Blue Knight, and she had believed him. So she realized that she didn't know Koutarou's real name.

“This was rather rude of me. My name is—”

In response, Koutarou responded with the same words he had used that day. But that was where they split.

“My name is Koutarou. Satomi Koutarou. I swear on this sword that I will definitely protect you.”

Unlike before, this time, Koutarou revealed his true name. But he swore on his sword just like then. And this time the feelings behind his oath was far, far stronger.

“Koutarou-sama… so you are called Koutarou-sama…”

It was an outlandish name not heard of in Forthorthe. Unaccustomed to speaking such a name, Alaia repeated it several times.

“I am truly sorry for using a fake name up until now.”

“There was a time when I called myself Cigna, so with this we're even.”

“Hahaha, that happened too, didn't it…”

This was during the dance at the harvest festival.

It was just a few months ago, but because so much had happened since then, it already felt like years. But it was a precious memory neither of them could ever forget.

“So, your highness, what was your last question?”

Koutarou and Alaia were both smiling. It was the same smile they had during the dance that night. Ever since then, their feelings had intertwined.

“That's—”

Alaia smiled and held her hands in front of her chest. She then whispered to Koutarou in a very gentle voice.

“If I had met you first… if… I had asked you first… what would you do, Koutarou-sama?”

Alaia knew that if didn't exist and hadn't occurred.

But, what if.

What if she had met Koutarou before anyone else? Would Koutarou remain here, with her?

She was well aware that this was a foolish thing to ask, but she couldn't help herself. That was how much she loved Koutarou.

“If that had happened… I probably would have served you for my entire life.”

That was what Koutarou truly believed. He didn't mind swearing his loyalty to Alaia. She was such a splendid princess that he couldn't feel any other way. And he had made so many memories with her. He most likely felt the same way towards her as he did with the invading girls.

“Koutarou-sama, please come meet me first next time…”

Alaia was satisfied. She had learned that Koutarou was leaving because of the order in which they had met. It wasn’t as if her feelings hadn’t been conveyed…

“As you wish, my princess…”

“…Koutarou-sama…”

But even then, Alaia shed her tears.

She had understood everything. Despite understanding, she still couldn't keep herself from crying.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Part 1

Like on Earth, various creatures existed on Forthorthe.

But they were only similar to the ones on Earth at first glance. Because of the environment of the planet, while there were creatures that might have similar shapes, the details were completely different. A good example would be the horse. The ones on Forthorthe had horns and its hair grew in different places.

There were also large beasts that grew over ten meters. Though their numbers had diminished over the years thanks to the climate change, they were active under the surface, and would sometimes threaten the lives of the people.

But the creatures that people feared the most out of those giant beasts were probably the dragons. Like the dinosaurs on Earth, the dragons were on the top of the food chain. Dragons were large reptiles that got bigger for each year that passed, and in many cases exceeded ten meters in height. There were plenty of dragons of the species known as the elder dragons, those of which that exceeded even 30 meters in height. They could freely move their gigantic bodies, and accompanied with sharp fangs and claws, destroy any enemy and devour them.

However, the dragons weren't feared for just their sizes. Creatures larger than that existed. No, there were two other reasons for why the dragons were so feared. The first was that they could fly despite their massive size. And the second was that they could spew out a special kind of breath.

Dragons had large wings on their backs, the shape of which was very similar to the pterosaurs' on Earth. Using those wings, they could freely fly across the sky. They were very mobile despite their size. Of course, wings alone wouldn't be enough to allow them to fly with that massive body of theirs, so they used the magic power in their bodies as well. In other words, though limited, they were also magicians.

There was also another scenario where dragons used magic. That was when they used their special breath to attack. Thanks to their massive figures, they were able to exhale their breaths at unbelievable speeds. The dragons used magic power to change the quality of that breath and then use it as an attack. In most cases they spewed flames, but there were also dragons that could spew ice, poison gas and even acid. There were all kinds of variations to the breath, and there were also dragons that would spew something surprising out from time to time. It was possible to guess what a dragon would spew based on the color of its body. If its body was red it would tend to spew flames, if it was white it would spew out ice and so on.

Dragons were feared thanks to these two special abilities. They were next to impossible to run from thanks to their ability to fly, and there was no way to protect oneself from their breath. Amongst the dragons were highly intelligent and peaceful individuals as well, but many of them were brutal predators. When faced with a dragon, anyone would have to make peace with their fate. So until the climate changes reduced the number of dragons even further, they would continue to stand on the top of the food chain.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya, mentioned in the legend of the Blue Knight was one of those dragons.

Its giant red body easily surpassed 20 meters, and it took to the sky like a jet plane. However, its movements weren't as sluggish as a jet, instead it was as quick and as agile as a hawk or eagle. On top of that, this elder dragon could spew flames so hot they could almost be considered as plasma.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

As a result, when this dragon appeared on the horizon seemingly flying towards Raustor, the fort got noisy fast. The reborn Forthorthe army consisted mostly of volunteers. Lacking any proper training, they were shaking in their boots. They all knew just how frightening a dragon was, and weapons of this age weren't quite able to bring down a dragon. Like a storm, once a dragon appeared, they had to hide until it passed.

“Bertorion, this is bad!”

Having received a report from the soldiers on lookout, Flair burst into Koutarou's quarter in the barracks. The sun had just risen, and Koutarou who had just woken up was in the middle of changing.

“Lord Flairhan!?”

As Flair burst in, Koutarou's upper half was naked, and he was just about to put on a shirt. The surprisingly bashful Flair would normally have run back out of the room with a blushing face after seeing this. However, this wasn't the time for that, and she was panicking.

“It's a dragon! A dragon is attacking! At this rate we'll be destroyed before we even reach the coup d'état army!”

“A dragon!? That kind of thing—no, that's right, if it's coming now it must be Alunaya!”

Koutarou had been confused about hearing that a dragon had appeared, but he quickly remembered that it had also appeared in Theia's manuscript. The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya. It was the crimson dragon that Yurika had been acting as.

“What's the situation!?”

Koutarou forcibly put on his shirt and asked Flair. Now wasn't the time to casually get clothed; he had to quickly prepare for battle.

“The soldiers on lookout spotted a red dragon coming this way! Because of the distance they can't tell just how big it is, but with the dragon’s speed it'll be here any moment!”

From the lookout tower, the horizon lied several tens of kilometers away. If the dragon was as fast as an eagle or hawk, or even faster, it would reach the fort within only a few minutes.

“I got it! You go on ahead, Lord Flairhan, prepare the soldiers to intercept it! I'll be there as soon as I'm ready!”

“Good! Get out here as quickly as possible!”

Flair quickly dashed out of the quarters without saying anything else. With a dragon approaching, there was no time to spare.

“Did you get that, Clan!?”

After changing his clothes, Koutarou called out to Clan on the other side of the screen. As he did, he ran up to the armor standing by the wall. He touched the right arm of the armor and it opened up, as if welcoming him.

“Yes! I knew it'd be coming, but this timing is quite a pain!”

Clan was also hurriedly preparing her outfit on the other side of the screen. If Alunaya was as powerful as the legends say, it would be too much for normal soldiers. The only effective way of intercepting Alunaya was for Koutarou and Clan to come to the front.

“We just took this fort after all…”

Koutarou entered the open armor and showed a bitter expression.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

The reborn Forthorthe army had just captured the fort of Raustor the day before yesterday. They were currently in the middle of transporting men and supplies for the next battle. Because of that, the soldiers hadn't properly rested since they took the fort. This was the worst timing for an attack to happen. And what's worse, their enemy was what the people of Forthorthe feared the most, a dragon. If they were delayed, there would be a massive amount of casualties.

“Hey, Clan.”

As Koutarou closed up the armor and locked the various parts in place, he brought up the system. As he ordered it to scan for the enemy, he called out to Clan.

“Do you think this armor will be a match for a dragon?”

“I'm not sure.”

Clan answered Koutarou as she stepped out from the screen. She was already holding a large rifle, and she approached Koutarou after picking up Saguratin, which was leaning against the screen.

“The dragon population steadily declined as the climate changed, so in our age there's no record of any battles with an elder dragon. There are records of battles won against smaller dragons that survived, but—”

“That won't be of any help when dealing with this monster, huh…”

The armor created a 3D image in the air and displayed information. Combined with the information from Clan's observation device, the armor reported on the details flying towards them.

‘26 meters long, flying at 198 km/h. Warning, high-density energy reaction detected, be wary of energy weapons. Space distortion detected. Take care when attacking.’

The report gave nothing but bad news. According to the artificial intelligence in the armor, everything except the speed was at the level of a fighter. Their chances of victory were not high at all; this wasn't an opponent they could go easy on.

“That's right, sadly.”

Clan nodded and handed Saguratin to Koutarou. Both of their expressions were serious.

“Thanks.”

Koutarou hung Saguratin down from his waist and headed towards the exit with Clan right behind him.

“This is the moment of truth.”

“Whether we can return to our own world or not is all on this fight.”

Clan believed that Koutarou was the real Blue Knight, but it's not like she had any proof of this. In Theia's manuscript, the Blue Knight won against Alunaya, but she didn't know if she and Koutarou could do the same.

And if they lost, history would greatly change. If that happened, chances of Koutarou and Clan being able to return home would be next to nothing. Of course, there was a chance that they would die in this battle and not be able to try in the first place.

“…What was your god called again?”

“The goddess of dawn.”

“Then please pray for our victory to that goddess.”

“I don't mind, but… why now, all of a sudden?”

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Koutarou didn't seem very religious to Clan. So him praying for god's help came as a big surprise for her.

“I feel like we should do whatever we can, even if it is praying.”

If only their own fate was on the line, Koutarou might not have relied on prayers. However, if it was to protect Alaia and the others, he would do whatever he could. That was just how much he valued Alaia and her companions.

“…I understand how you feel. I will pray for us. But please keep yourself together in front of the soldiers.”

“Yeah. That's why I asked you, Clan.”

“I'm not sure if that means if you trust me or if you don't…”

The two showed each other slight smiles and hurried out of the barracks. The Fire Dragon Emperor Alunaya was almost upon them.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Part 2

Once Koutarou and Clan stepped outside, the dragon was already close enough to be seen with the naked eye.

“So that's the Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya, huh…”

“It really is huge…”

They both instinctively held their breaths as they saw Alunaya's massive figure.

That thing's completely different from Yurika's disguise…

The real deal was on a completely different level from the dragon that appeared in the play. Fitting of the name of Fire Dragon Emperor, Koutarou could feel that the coming battle would be intense.

“Bertorion, it's hard to tell if the weapons on this fort will have any effect on it.”

There were ballistae and catapults installed in the fort, which were intended to keep attacking soldiers at bay and to destroy siege weapons before they could be deployed. However, they weren't very effective against a flying enemy.

“So we have to do it on our own, huh…”

“And that's as fast as possible.”

Fitting of its name, Alunaya spewed scorching hot flames. If left alone, it would burn down the fort and town. If that happened, any victory gained would be hollow. They had to bring down Alunaya before it could reach them.

“Kou… no, Reios-sama!”

“Blue Knight!”

That was when Alaia appeared outside of the headquarters. Beside her were Charl, Mary and Fauna.

“Your highness!? What are you doing here!?”

“With that thing here, it won't matter where we are! More importantly, Reios-sama, I want you to position the men closer to the town!”

She might not be able to prevent the dragon from attacking, but as this country's royalty, she couldn't just watch the attack happen. Aware of the possibly massive casualties, Alaia wanted the soldiers to protect the town. Anything that would allow for the people of the town to take shelter.

“Got it! I'll let Lord Flairhan know! Hey!”

“Yes.”

Koutarou called for his young adjutant and asked him to convey a message to Flair. Meanwhile, Flair was currently busy moving the soldiers. If she heard of Alaia's wish, she would be able to move the soldiers that way.

After seeing the adjutant run off towards Flair, Koutarou looked up at Alunaya with a serious expression once more.

“Clan, how far can this armor fly?”

“There's no limit using the standard flight module, but there's a limit on the propellant for the emergency boosters, so you'll only be able to fly at max speed for about ten minutes. Please be careful.”

While responding to Koutarou, Clan readied the rifle she was carrying on her shoulder. It was the large rifle she was always using, but the bullets she was using this time were different. They were bullets that she had prepared ahead of time as she knew that Alunaya would appear sooner or later. These bullets had high penetration and exploded on direct hits. Since the explosion was a shaped charge facing the object it hits, it would be able to pierce even the thickest of armors. She wasn't sure if that would be enough to blast through Alunaya's scales, but it was far better than trying to attack using normal bullets.

“Ten minutes, huh… not sure if that'll be enough…”

The problem for Koutarou was whether he had enough time to defeat something as massive as that dragon. He was wearing extremely advanced technology, but in the end that was just for personal use. His chances of winning weren't all that high. However, since the Cradle had not been repaired yet, he had to defeat Alunaya with the weapons at hand and the time allotted to him.

“Alright!”

Koutarou steeled himself. This was no time to be weak. This wasn't a question of if he could do it or not, he had no choice but to do it.

“Princess Alaia, please take princess Charl with you and hide somewhere safe.”

“Blue Knight, what will you do?”

Charl looked up at Koutarou with a worried look on her face.

“We're going to keep that thing from getting any closer.”

“Please leave it to us, princess Charl.”

Koutarou and Clan smiled at Charl, they were both ready for what's to come.

“Blue Knight…”

However, Charl's expression didn't change. Thanks to her good intuition, she could tell that Koutarou and Clan were about to take part in a dangerous battle.

“You can't, Blue Knight! You and your underling can't win against that thing on your own! You can't go!”

Charl grabbed a hold of the hems of Koutarou's mantle and shook her head.

“Your highness, if I don't go, a lot of people will die.”

The best case scenario would be if they could defeat Alunaya, but they had to at least buy enough time for the soldiers to be positioned around the town. If they didn't, there would be a lot of casualties.

“I know that! But, I don't want you to go!”

Tears began forming in Charl's eyes and she strongly held the hem of Koutarou's mantle. She would never release it, or let him go. Charl was desperate as she didn't want Koutarou to die.

“Charl, you mustn't trouble Reios-sama anymore.”

“Sister! You don't care if Blue Knight dies!?”

Alaia smiled at Charl and gentle wrapped her hands around the hand holding the mantle.

“Of course I do.”

Alaia then removed finger after finger from the mantle.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

“But Reios-sama made an oath that he would definitely protect us. If he died here, he wouldn't be able to uphold that oath. Charl, your Blue Knight isn't the kind to lie, is he?”

Alaia was well aware of how dangerous this fight was going to be. There was even a chance that Koutarou might die. But as a princess, Alaia trusted in the oath her knight had sworn. And as a woman, she believed in the oath the man she loved had sworn. She repeatedly told herself that if she didn't believe in Koutarou, then who else would?

“Sister…”

Understanding how her sister must feel, Charl let go of the mantle. Having been set free, Koutarou smiled at her.

“Your highness, I will definitely return victorious. I haven't let you ride on a horse yet after all.”

“You better! You better return!”

“Yes, definitely.”

Koutarou nodded and turned towards Alaia.

“I'm going, princess Alaia.”

“I scorn the part of me that doesn't let me say ‘don't go,’ Reios-sama…”

Alaia was courageously smiling, but her eyes were moist. Though she believed in him, it wasn't like she wasn't worried. In reality, she wanted to stop Koutarou more than anyone.

“No, that's how my princess should act.”

But Koutarou wanted to repay her trust in any way possible, precisely because of the way she was.

What let Koutarou and Clan float in the air was the power of gravity manipulation. Because of that, there weren't any loud sounds as those with planes. The two of them quietly flew through the sky.

The season in Forthorthe was near the end of fall; winter was approaching. Koutarou and Clan could feel a cold and dry wind, and because of their speed it felt even colder. However, the two of them didn't have the time to shiver, as in front of them was a gigantic crimson dragon, Alunaya.

“You often see dragons in movies and such… but seeing them in reality like this, it's almost like a joke.”

“And it's that mobile despite its size… this is no laughing matter.”

Alunaya seemed to have noticed Koutarou and Clan as well, as it turned its head towards them and changed its course. Despite being over 20 meters in size, it maneuvered like a comparatively tiny bird of prey. Clan had seen movies about the Blue Knight, but Alunaya was never this big or quick. Neither Koutarou nor Clan felt the winter cold in front of this threat that was beyond all imagination.

“…I'll be lending a hand too, Blue Knight.”

There was someone who had followed after the two. That person was sitting on a flying long cane and had lined up beside them without making a sound.

“Caris…”

That person was none other than the magician, Caris. She was using her own magic to make her cane fly. For a magician like her, flying was but child's play.

As Caris's eyes met with Koutarou's, she smiled as her black clothes fluttered in the wind.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

“To think you'd go without telling me first, you must not trust me at all.”

“I wouldn't ask you for help if I'm not sure I could win.”

Caris used to be one of the court magicians led by Grevanas. She had left the group after Grevanas had tried to kill her alongside Alaia, but she had no real obligation to help Alaia nor Koutarou. She had been helping Koutarou and the others to repay the favor for curing her when she was sick, but Koutarou couldn't just ask her to fight against Alunaya.

“But with me here, we might have a bigger chance of winning.”

“…Are you sure?”

“Not really, but… after this is over, you'll treat me to a ton of delicious food, won't you?”

To Caris who was an orphan, the court magicians had been her family. But after being betrayed, she had no place left to call home, and nothing to protect.

With that, all Caris had left was the days she had spent with Koutarou and the others. To Caris who had a rough childhood and busy life with nothing but missions, they were calm and gentle memories.

That's why Caris fought to protect them. As they might become her new home and family.

“Leave it to me, I'll ask her highness once we're done.”

“Alright, now I'm getting all fired up.”

As Caris cheerfully nodded, Alunaya approached from directly ahead and let out a loud roar.

ROAAAAAAAAAAAAAR

It was a voice so loud it made even the air around them tremble. It was intense enough to make them instinctively flinch.

“…But my, aren't you eccentric. To think you'd go up against that of your own free will.”

As Clan said that she pumped herself up. It's not like she wasn't afraid. Her opponent was a legendary creature after all.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

“You two were going to fight it on your own, weren't you? You two sound much more eccentric to me.”

Caris smiled wryly as she said that, but she secretly felt like she may have acted too rashly. Her opponent was one of the strongest elder dragons. No other dragon dared come near Forthorthe because Alunaya was here. And she believed she must be an idiot to want to fight something like that herself.

“That's enough chatting.”

Koutarou flew up ahead of Clan and Caris. He was frightened by Alunaya as well, but his many promises and oaths supported him.

“It's almost here.”

Thanks to Sanae's powers, Koutarou could see Alunaya's killing intent. Though those powers had weakened as time passed, he still could clearly tell as much.

Koutarou pulled Saguratin from out of its sheath and pointed the tip towards Alunaya. As he did, the blade reflected the sunshine, and it was almost as if the many promises and oaths were making the sword shine.

“…We don't have much time, so let's just settle for us both being eccentric.”

“Let's do that. Let's save this discussion for lunch.”

Clan readied her rifle and Caris began incanting a spell. In front of them was a gigantic dragon, and as they looked at it, their bodies began trembling on their own.

“…I'm counting on you two.”

However, in front of them was the back of a young man wearing a blue armor.

“Leave it to me.”

“I know. Don't you forget your promise.”

Looking at that back, their trembles settled down and instead, they were filled with a strong fighting spirit.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Part 3

Alunaya made the first move. The crimson dragon took a big breath and spewed out flames from its mouth. It wasn't something as plain as a flamethrower; no, this was as if a giant pillar of flame flew out of its mouth.

“Spread out!”

Since Koutarou could see Alunaya's intent to attack, he knew where the attack would hit. And thanks to Caris's magic creating a mental connection between the three, they were all able to avoid the flames ahead of time.

ROOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAAR

However, despite their distance from the flames, they could still feel the heat and the created shock wave. The glowing white flame breath then continued flying through the sky and vanished cross the horizon.

“…That's practically a plasma cannon. If we're hit we don't stand a chance.”

“Make sure you don't eat that, Caris.”

“As if I would!”

The temperature of Alunaya's flame breath was so high it practically turned into plasma. The only thing Clan knew of that could do that was a large-scale weapon on space ships. The flame breath's power was enough to amaze her.

“Blue Knight, dragons only use magic to fly and for breath attacks. However, with those restrictions, their power is much more frightening. Be very careful!”

Caris knew that the flames had been created by altering the dragon's breath using magic. As a magician, she could tell just how massive the dragon’s magic reserves were.

“I'll take the front! Cover me!”

Koutarou had used emergency boosters to dodge the flame pillar. He then set them to full thrust and accelerated in an instant. Drawing a curve in the sky, he approached Alunaya. He was getting closer to the dragon so he could attack, while at the same time making it hard for it to use its flame breath.

“Grrrrrr…”

Alunaya responded by turning its head and opening its mouth once more. It was planning on frying Koutarou before he could get close.

“I can't let you do that!”

However, before Alunaya could spew its flames, a small explosion occurred near its face. The barrel of Clan's rifle was smoking. The explosion had been created from a bullet fired from her rifle. The relative speed between the two were several hundred km/h, but the firearms control system allowed her to accurately snipe at those speeds.

“ROAAAAAAAAAAAAAR!”

Because of the shockwave and fire from the explosion, Alunaya temporarily lost sight of Koutarou. In order to regain its sight, it shook its large head. During that time, Koutarou was able to approach the dragon.

“ROAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAR!”

However, Alunaya quickly recovered and swung its giant claws towards him. The attack produced by that 20-meter giant was as powerful as a car smashing into something at high

speed. That attack that would certainly destroy Koutarou if it hit approached him from the front. Since Koutarou was moving at high speeds, dodging that attack was difficult.

“Sorry, that Blue Knight is a fake.”

However, the moment those giant claws touched Koutarou, he vanished as if he was a mirage. At the same time, a second Koutarou appeared from behind Alunaya and aimed for the dragon's neck.

The first Koutarou was an illusion that had been created at the same time as Clan's bullet hit. And while Alunaya was distracted by the fake, Koutarou got behind the dragon and swung his sword.

“Haaaaaaaaaaah!”

Koutarou's sword struck Alunaya's neck. However, his sword merely bounced off as if it had crashed into a wall. He had gotten a similar response when he had fought the steel giant.

“It didn't work!? These scales are tough!”

Because they were some distance away, Koutarou's thoughts were directly transmitted to Clan's and Caris's minds. And in response to that, Clan shook her head.

“That's not right, Bertorion! It's being protected by a powerful barrier!”

Clan's bracelet that was linked to the scope of the rifle had captured the moment when Koutarou's attack hit the dragon. In that footage, Koutarou's sword had been repelled before it even reached the scales.

“A barrier!?”

Koutarou was surprised by Clan's words while he was evading Alunaya and trying to get into its blind spot without separating from the dragon. Parting with Alunaya would only put him at a disadvantage for both attacking and defending.

“Looks like it wasn't just flight and breath! That's a third spell!”

It was assumed that dragons only used two spells: flight assistance and breath attacks. But on top of these, Alunaya also used a spell to protect its body from attacks.

However, this was originally an ability that it had developed to stabilize its body within air currents. By wrapping its entire body in a streamlined barrier, it was able to fly at high speeds despite its figure. On top of this, it was also able to briefly fly at extreme heights where there was little oxygen.

Though the ability had been born because of that, it was also good enough to repel attacks.

“I see! So that's why it was completely uninjured from my attack too!”

Though Clan's bullet had temporarily deprived Alunaya of sight, it hadn't injured it. The barrier had protected against both the bullet and the following explosion.

“Clan, what do we do!? Don't you have any good ideas!?”

Koutarou repeatedly dodged from Alunaya's claws while attacking from time to time. However, each of his attacks were blocked by the barrier. Since they would be at a standstill like this, Koutarou sought advice from Clan.

“Use your left arm!”

“Left arm!? You mean Kiriha's gauntlet!?”

“That's right! Even though that barrier can block physical attacks, it shouldn't be able to block electric and magnetic fields! Aim for its nervous system from point blank!”

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Clan's plan was to use the gauntlet built into the armor's left arm.

Physical attacks might be blocked by the barrier, but electromagnetism might be able to get through. If things went well, they might be able to shock it from the inside of its barrier, and even if they couldn't, they could expose Alunaya to an electromagnetic field.

Since it was a living creature, Alunaya's nerves should operate through electrical signals. And striking it with a powerful enough electromagnetic field should be able to keep it from moving properly. If they aimed for the cerebellum or cerebrum, they might even be able to knock it unconscious.

At their current state, closing in and using the gauntlet at point blank range was the best option they had.

“Got it, I'll give it a try!”

“I'll try using optical weaponry! The power will drop, but it just might work!”

Clan had Alunaya in her sights. Therefore, if she used an attack that relied on light, it might work.

Barriers in Forthorthe, 2,000 years from now, were designed to block both physical attacks and the light from lasers. However, Alunaya's barrier hadn't been developed to deal with lasers, so it was quite possible that lasers would work.

“Let's do this, Clan!”

Koutarou pointed the tip of Saguratin towards Alunaya. He then held the blade with his left hand and generated an electromagnetic field. The field expanded past the tip of the sword and became an invisible spear. Because of the powerful electromagnetic field, electrons began gathering at the tip of the sword. They began building up a huge, negative charge, and the sword began sparking and glowing.

As Koutarou was about to charge forward, several more young men in blue armor appeared around him. They all looked like Koutarou.

“Is that you, Caris!? Thanks!”

“It'll be hard for me to do any damage with my magic. So I'll be in charge of defense and diversions. I'll leave the attacking to you, Blue Knight!”

Eight more Koutarous appeared around him. They were all illusions created by Caris. She had figured that her spells wouldn't be able to do any damage to Alunaya, and defending from the dragon's claws and flame breath would be difficult. So she created a large amount of illusions to protect Koutarou through diversions.

“Bertorion, here it comes!”

Clan squeezed the trigger while warning Koutarou. As she did, the barrel lit up for an instant. What was fired wasn't a bullet, but light given a high amount of energy. The speed of the laser was the speed of light; by the time you could see the attack, it had already hit. No matter how mobile Alunaya was, it wouldn't be able to dodge that.

“ROAAAAAAARR!”

The laser burned the crimson dragon's body. As she had expected, Alunaya's barrier couldn't block lasers. Not even a dragon could block something it didn't know off. Alunaya twisted its body and let out a scream of pain as the laser burned the scales and its body behind them.

“It's working! Now, Bertorion!”

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Since Clan's laser was designed as an anti-personnel weapon, it didn't have enough power to penetrate Alunaya's body. However, the pain and surprise from having its body burnt gave Koutarou an opening.

“Taaaaakeeeee thiiiiisss!”

Koutarou charged with his sword thrust out in front of him. Since he was already up close, the very next moment, Koutarou's sword assaulted Alunaya. The sword itself was repelled by the barrier, but the electromagnetic field passed through. As the electromagnetic field pierced the barrier, the gathered electrons scattered, however they gathered back up once past the barrier.

“How about thiiiiiss!”

The moment the electromagnetic field reached Alunaya's body, Koutarou focused on his left arm. As he did, his spiritual power, enhanced by Sanae, began flowing into his left arm and extended the electromagnetic field, which in turn created a very big electric potential difference between the tip of the sword and Alunaya's body.

A white flash prevented Koutarou from seeing anything. At the same time, a sharp sound, as if someone cracked a whip, shook the atmosphere. Though it might have sounded like a whip, it was much, much louder. It was the sound of a huge current flowing into Alunaya because of the potential difference.

“ROAAAAAAAAAAAR!”

The artificial thunderbolt created by Kiriha's gauntlet struck Alunaya and ran through its body. This attack was effective even against Alunaya, especially since it had hit where Alunaya's nerves were gathered. The artificial intelligence in the armor had guided Koutarou to that spot after analyzing Alunaya. As a result, Alunaya lost control of its body in an instant.

“Uwaaah!”

The only miscalculation had been that Koutarou had been unable to dodge Alunaya's tail. He had been unable to dodge it as he had been temporarily blinded by the lightning. And even if he could see where the dragon intended to attack, he couldn't foresee the dragon swinging its tail by reflex.

“Bertorion!”

Koutarou was struck by the tail and was sent flying, spinning out of control. He had lost his bearings and had trouble recovering.

“Leave it to me!”

Caris began chanting a spell to use on Koutarou.

“Gather, spirits of wind! Show your great power! Become a whirl, dance with him and correct his rhythm!”

Caris cast a spell that would use the wind to decelerate Koutarou. She had to start by stopping him from spinning.

Caris's magic activated at the same time as the armor's control system. The armor used the gravity and boosters to slow the spinning. And as Caris supported him, Koutarou was able to stop spinning and falling.

“Ugh, d-damn it, what…?”

Though his body might have stopped spinning, Koutarou's eyes hadn't, and he was unable to keep his balance. He shook his head repeatedly in an attempt to stop his eyes from spinning. At that time, the armor let out a warning.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

“Alert message. High-density energy reaction detected. Urgent evasion required.”

The thunderbolt from before hadn't been able to defeat Alunaya. Now it had recovered and spewed out flames aimed at Koutarou.

“I'll leave that to you!”

“As you wish my lord. Evading using irregular algorithms.”

However, Koutarou still hadn't recovered from the damage he had taken. Knowing that it would be difficult to evade on his own, Koutarou left evading to the armor. The armor began accelerating and decelerating irregularly and dodged the flames. However, since the armor couldn't see the intention to attack like Koutarou could, it wasn't able to completely dodge. Although a direct hit was avoided, Koutarou got burned several times by the flames.

“Bertorion!”

“I'm fine, don't worry!”

However, Koutarou was able to recover before taking any serious damage from the fire. He used his eyes to read where Alunaya was going to be attacking and dodged.

“…All this just for letting my guard down for a moment…”

Having gotten through the crisis once, Koutarou looked at the damage the armor had taken and pulled himself together. The armor had scorch marks and a dent from when he had been hit by the tail. All of the attacks could very well have been lethal.

“Theia… the real Alunaya is far stronger than the one you imagined…”

Koutarou strongly gripped the handle of Saguratin while looking at Alunaya's gigantic body.

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Part 4

Alaia prayed as she looked up at Koutarou's and the others battle.

Koutarou-sama…!

Koutarou's opponent was a monster well over 20 meters. It was like a cat challenging a lion. No matter how strong Koutarou was, he wasn't going to be able to overcome the gap in strength of an opponent over ten times his size. Even though Clan and Caris were helping him, it seemed to be a wasted effort.

At this rate, Koutarou-sama will die…!

That feeling slowly crept up in Alaia. When Alaia felt that, she realized that she was feeling insecure for the first time in a long while.

Ever since she had met Koutarou, Alaia had always felt safe. She was certain that even if something were to happen to her, Koutarou would protect Charl and support this country. And that certainty had supported her.

On top of that, after losing her parents, Koutarou was the only one who had learned of Alaia's feelings and understood her. With full knowledge of all her worries, he had called her actions correct, which had also supported her.

If Koutarou were to die, she would lose those two supports at the same time. To her, that was something incredibly frightening, and just imagining that made her thin white hands shake.

“…I should have broken the seal on that sword before this happened…”

Alaia's anxiousness made those words leave her lips. Fauna who was next to Alaia made a sad expression upon hearing that.

“Your highness… that's…”

As a priestess of the goddess of dawn, Fauna knew just what those words meant. They were words that would never be spoken if it wasn't for Alaia's overwhelming feelings for Koutarou.

“You can do it, Blue Knight! I'm with you!”

“Princess Charl, no! It's dangerous to reach your body so far out!”

“Let go, Mary! I won't hide! My and my sister's knight is fighting! How can we not cheer him on!?”

However, Charl's powerful words helped ease Alaia's worries.

“Charl… you're so strong…”

At first, Charl had worried and didn't want Koutarou to go, but after having let go, her belief in his victory was unshakeable.

“Sister! Please call out to Blue Knight too! If you do, Blue Knight will surely return home safe!”

And in order to make her belief come true, she did whatever she could. The only thing young Charl could do was cheer, but she was desperate to be of Koutarou's help.

Charl… you might be more suited to be the empress than I am…

Charl's strong and prideful will dazzled Alaia.

“You're right Charl… I'll cheer for him too.”

Taking a lesson from Charl, Alaia believed that Koutarou would be victorious and cheered on from behind. She could do other things after this.

“Sister! Here!”

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Charl smiled at Alaia and beckoned for Alaia to stand above her. Alaia nodded and stood at the same place as Charl.

“Blue Knight! You can do it! Sister is cheering for you too!”

“Reios-sama! Stay strong!”

They didn't know if their voices reached all the way to Koutarou. However, they believed that it would and shouted. That was the only way those two could fight right now.

Following their shouts, the nearby soldiers began shouting as well. The shouts and cheers grew louder and filled the fort.

Koutarou was fighting several hundred meters away from Alaia and Charl. On top of that, there was the sound of the wind, his boosters and the dragon's roar as it spewed its flames. Because of that, Alaia's and Charl's voices couldn't reach him.

“…I definitely can't lose! Her highness and everyone is waiting for me to come home!”

However, their voices were the only thing that didn't reach him. Their feelings had reached him, and he knew what the people at the fort were saying.

Having played baseball for the longest time, Koutarou knew that they were cheers despite not being able to properly hear them. And the fact that the cheers reached all the way to him summoned a powerful willpower in him.

“I can do this! It's not like the dragon hasn't taken any damage!”

Koutarou glared at Alunaya with his new found willpower and pointed the tip of his sword towards its giant body.

As Koutarou said, Alunaya had gotten weaker. The damage from Koutarou's gauntlet and Clan's laser had gradually accumulated in its body. And having flown at full speed for several minutes was taxing on Alunaya's stamina.

Sensing that, Koutarou threw away the notion that it was an unbeatable opponent.

“Bertorion, only a third of the propellant is left! And the entire frame has taken considerable damage. There's no time to slack off!”

However, Koutarou was taking damage alongside Alunaya. And since he was much smaller, his damage was far more severe.

The armor had taken hits from the flames and claws. The intense battle had taken its toll on the armor and left behind severe damage.

The armor's functions were currently making up for the damage, but if he took any more, he would be in danger.

“My magic power is running low as well. I'm restricting healing magic to serious injuries only.”

And Koutarou himself had suffered damage. The smaller wounds included cuts, bruises and burns, while the more serious injuries included dislocation and fractures. Caris had used her magic to heal that, but her magic power was now running low, and she would have a hard time healing Koutarou.

“Leave that to me. Just focus on what you can do.”

“I'll do my best.”

“Sorry, but I don't have any room to think about that.”

“You're reckless as always.”

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

“This is not the kind of opponent I can beat without being reckless!”

Koutarou readied Saguratin with both hands, pointed the tip towards Alunaya and charged. The eight Koutarou illusions created by Caris surrounded him as he did so. The nine Koutarous swapped positions and headed towards Alunaya.

“Grrrrrrrrrr.”

Alunaya revealed its fangs and threatened Koutarou. However, it wasn't trying to attack using its breath attacks. It was well aware that the majority of Koutarous were fakes.

Not good, it's learning…

Koutarou clicked his tongue in his mind. Alunaya was calm. In Koutarou's experience, the winner of a fight was always the one who remained calm from beginning to end.

“Blue Knight, if you want to finish this faster, I have an idea.”

Sensing that Koutarou was beginning to panic, Caris proposed an idea to Koutarou.

“Tell me.”

Alunaya waited for Koutarou to close in before swinging its massive tail towards the nine Koutarous.

Koutarou responded to Caris while defending at once using his sword. The moment he did, the armor's system let out a cry.

“The first and third drive unit as well as the load bearing right arm elbow joint have exceeded the maximum tolerance. Bypassing circuits, readjusting balance of driving units. Left arm output reduced by 20%, the degree of freedom in the right arm elbow joint decreased by 14%. In addition—”

The armor reported on the damage. The 3D image displaying the condition of the armor was being filled with red marks.

“That's enough with the detailed report! I am aware that I'm in trouble! Just report on what won't move!”

“As you wish, my lord.”

The next moment, the red marks on the 3D image all vanished, leaving behind a yellow mark on the right elbow.

“Are you okay, Blue Knight!?”

“Bertorion!”

“I'm still fine! So what was it, Caris!?”

The illusions all vanished, leaving Koutarou all alone. If he distanced himself from Alunaya like this, he would be attacked by the flame breath. He was better off sticking close and attacking. Deciding on that, Koutarou put his left hand on the sword and generated an electromagnetic field. He was planning on attacking like this.

“Strange magical power is gathering in the back of that dragon's neck. Attacking there might be a good idea.”

Just a while ago, Caris had used a spell to determine what kind of magic Alunaya was using. As a result, she was able to detect several active spells.

A strengthening spell surrounding its body and assisting with flight, a defensive spell that blocked attacks, and a spell that turned the breath its exhaled into a pillar of flame. Caris had been expecting those three, so knowing the strength of the spells would be of use to Koutarou.

However, in reality, she had detected another spell at this time. Caris didn't know what kind of spell that was since it was a spell she didn't know off. However, she knew where the source of that magic power was, and that was at the back of the dragon's neck. There, some kind of spell was active, and attacking that might have an effect on Alunaya. It was a gamble, but Caris believed they would have a higher chance of winning by attacking that point rather than continuing fighting like this.

"The back of the neck right!?"

Koutarou put his boosters to full thrust in order to get behind Alunaya and get a shot at its neck.

"Be careful, Blue Knight! A flame breath is coming!"

"At this range!?"

Koutarou had assumed that Alunaya wouldn't be able to use its flame breath once he was up close. So when Alunaya inhaled and get ready to spew flames, he was greatly surprised. Since Alunaya hated it when Koutarou got behind it, it was willing to even scorch its own body to hit him.

"Leave it to me!"

As Alunaya opened its mouth to spew flames, Clan fired several lasers from her rifle. The moderately spread out lasers burned Alunaya's face. Up until now, that would have stopped Alunaya in its track for a while, but this time was different. It had expected this would happen and spewed its flames while enduring the attacks.

The fire dragon's breath turned into a glowing white pillar and approached Koutarou. Had it been at a longer distance, he would be able to easily dodge it, but at this range evading was impossible. And then, just as it looked like Koutarou was about to be swallowed by the torrent of flames.

"Then I'll just do this!"

That was an idea that had just popped into his head. Koutarou altered the electromagnetic field generated in his sword to envelop himself as well. And at the same time, he poured all of his spiritual energy into his left arm. As he did that, Koutarou accelerated even faster, like a bullet. His speed was overwhelming and he instantly escaped from the range of the flames.

"B-Bertorion!? You idiot! Just, just how reckless can you get!"

Since Clan was monitoring Koutarou's armor's condition, she knew what he had done. Koutarou had generated a powerful electromagnetic field using his gauntlet and forcibly accelerated the armor. But by doing that, even an armor used in space wouldn't be able to completely block the magnetism and electromagnetic waves. Though the armor didn't break, the system spat out errors all over and the armor stopped its functions.

"You're wrong, Clan!"

However, Koutarou didn't stop moving. The armor's functions had all stopped, but the gauntlet on Koutarou's left arm was still working. Koutarou used that power and thrust his own body towards Alunaya.

"This is what you call—"

Led by Kiriha's gauntlet, Koutarou flew towards Alunaya. His sword was aimed at the back of Alunaya's neck, the point where Caris had sensed the gathering of magic power. This was his last chance to attack since he wasn't sure if his armor's systems would reboot.

"—being reckless!"

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya

Koutarou's Saguratin clashed with Alunaya's barrier. In that moment, Koutarou could see a large crystal attached to the back of Alunaya's neck. It was the only thing glowing blue on Alunaya's gigantic red body. Koutarou used his remaining strength to unleash a thunderbolt directed at it.

A white flash. The largest thunderbolt in this battle passed through Alunaya's barrier and attacked the glowing blue crystal.

“ROOOAAAAAAAAAR!”

Since Koutarou was exhausted, the electric attack he had poured all of his power into wasn't enough to break the crystal. However, after taking that hit, Alunaya seemed to be in great pain.

Alunaya bent its body in pain. The painful voice it let out reached all the way to the town and made the people there shudder. Alunaya then lost its ability to keep itself in the air and fell towards the ground.

“D-Did that do it…?”

The exhausted Koutarou also entered free fall while gazing at Alunaya. The armor still hadn't rebooted, and he no longer had any more strength to use his gauntlet. At this rate, Koutarou would smash into the ground at the terminal velocity of 200km/h.

“Heh, hehe, i-it's our win… your, highness…”

However, Koutarou lost his consciousness before he reached the ground. He had taken a lot of damage, and once he was certain of his victory, he relaxed too much to stay conscious.

The Sword in the Temple

Part 1

Koutarou had survived thanks to Clan and Caris who had accompanied him. Caris had used her magic to slow Koutarou down and Clan had just barely managed to catch him.

“Geez… what a problematic Blue Knight…”

Clan had thrown away her rifle to catch Koutarou, and that ended up smashing into the ground and shattering instead. However, that didn't seem to bother her as she was only relieved that Koutarou was safe.

Koutarou was then brought to the infirmary in the fort and was treated by Lidith, the alchemist, and Fauna, the priestess.

However, despite the treatment finishing, Koutarou was still unconscious. Worried, Alaia asked Lidith at her side while staring at Koutarou's face.

“Lidith, what is Reios-sama's condition?”

“He is injured all over, but there are no critical injuries. It seems like Caris's magic was of great help.”

As an alchemist, Lidith had knowledge of the most advanced medical arts in this age. Alchemists were scholars who studied everything from science and pharmacy to medical arts and magic. As a result, she was able to give Koutarou more adequate treatment than the so called home remedies. The experience she had gotten from serving as Clan's assistant also helped her.

“So Lidith, when will Blue Knight wake up?”

Charl climbed up next to the bed and gazed at Koutarou together with Alaia. She had no doubt that Koutarou would wake up since she firmly believed that Koutarou would let her ride a horse. But even then she was worried, and she stared at Koutarou's face while frowning.

The Sword in the Temple

The Sword in the Temple

“I can't say for sure… it all depends on Lord Bertorion.”

“Princess Charl, I'll do my best to wake up Reios-sama as fast as possible!”

“Yeah! Please do, Fauna!”

As a priestess of the goddess of dawn, Fauna could manipulate spiritual energy. She had been using those powers to activate Koutarou's body and speed up his recovery for a while now. One could consider it to be a stronger version of Sanae's massage. Since she had practiced that as part of her priesthood, she should be able to speed up Koutarou's recovery by at least twice as fast as normal.

By the way, using the medical kit on-board the Cradle, they would be able to heal Koutarou even faster. However, in this situation where they couldn't get a hold of supplies, there was a limit of the amount of times they could use the medical kit. So since these injuries could be healed using these aged techniques, the use of the medical kit was put off.

“Thank goodness… Reios-sama is alright…”

Hearing her companions speaking, Alaia was able to relax. She was able to feel that Koutarou was safe, not only from just their words, but from their attitude as well. Alaia showed a small smile and wiped off a tear that had formed in her eye.

When Koutarou had been dragged in unconscious, Alaia felt like her heart would stop. It was as if she had witnessed the end of the world. That was the moment she was reassured of just how valuable Koutarou was to her.

Alaia hadn't been able to calm down until Koutarou's treatment had ended and she could hear more details and judge her companions behavior.

“What a lucky man. It's hard to believe that he would be okay after fighting a monster like that.”

“He's always been a lucky man. After all—”

Clan swallowed her following words. They would have been the following.

After all, he was the man I tried to kill but couldn't.

However, despite that being the truth, saying that now could only be a disfavor to her. And admitting that Koutarou was her enemy was mortifying. Clan kept those words inside and continued with an innocent look.

“After all, a lot of people are always praying for this man to be safe.”

“Really. If Blue Knight doesn't stay alive, I'll be troubled. He still hasn't fulfilled his promise of feeding me something delicious.”

Unaware of Clan's feelings, Caris nodded repeatedly. Staring at Caris's face, Clan repeated her words to herself.

A lot of people are always praying for this man to be safe, huh… Now that I think about it, the same was true there…

As she did, Clan recalled Koutarou's life on Earth.

Koutarou lived with five girls in a small apartment. Clan's rival, Theia, was one of those girl, and all of the girls had been Koutarou's enemy to begin with. However, as time passed, hostilities ceased and they began respecting each other. The girls were probably even now worrying about Koutarou. That was why Koutarou was trying to return.

I must be the sixth… fufufu…

And the same could be said for Clan. She had tried to kill Koutarou, but now even she was worried for him. And what's more, Koutarou had offered to let her live with him if she lost a place to call home.

Koutarou was stupid, awkward and unable to live well. The invaders attacked one after another, he had been involved in their troubles, and in the end he had been thrown into a different space and time. Even if he wanted to return, he couldn't. If he had behaved a little different, this probably wouldn't have happened. However, the awkward Koutarou couldn't do that.

But he was a fortunate man. Someone was always worried for him. That would become his power to survive. And knowing that, Clan was certain that Koutarou would awake. While he was himself, he shouldn't be able to stay asleep. And everyone loved that awkward part of him.

“…He really is a lucky man…”

This man is probably the only one to have four princesses worrying about him…

Clan smiled at the sleeping Koutarou. She felt it was odd, but right now she honestly admitted to worrying for Koutarou.

“This is bad, princess Alaia! Flair-sama has come back with someone unbelievable!”

The maid, Mary, entered the infirmary with her face pale.

Flair had found that man when she had gone to confirm what happened to Alunaya.

Thanks to Koutarou's attack, Alunaya had crashed into a forest south of the fort. In order to confirm Alunaya's state, she had led a small force and entered the forest. However, they couldn't find Alunaya, no matter how much they looked. They had found trees they suspected Alunaya knocked over when it crashed, but not the dragon itself. With its size, it was hard to believe they could miss it, so Flair assumed that it had flown off and called off the search.

On their way home, Flair come across a man she had seen before.

Since it was such an unexpected person, Flair wasn't sure how she should deal with him. At first she thought of killing him, but in the end she decided it would be best for Alaia to pass judgment, and brought him back to Raustor's fort.

“…You have quite the courage to dare appear in front of us.”

Flair brought the man to a meeting room near the entrance to the fort. Alaia normally had a mild expression, but now she showed an ice cold one instead.

Behind Alaia were Clan and Charl. However, they said nothing and instead watched over the development. They were planning on leaving this to Alaia and Flair.

“That's precisely why, ‘princess’ Alaia.”

However, the man showed no signs of being shaken by her cold glance. Instead, he smiled slightly as he stood there. It was as if he didn't know he was in the heart of enemy territory.

“Such a brazen attitude… what business do you have, copper knight Dextro?”

Copper knight, Dextro. That was a name Alaia and the others would never forget.

Dextro was a knight of the Melcemhein family, and his title was copper. The Melcemhein family obeyed Maxfern, and made up a portion of the coup d'état army.

In the past, he had taken on a mission of pursuing Alaia, and launched an attack on them. At that time, the method of attacking he used had been to poison the water source, an indiscriminate attack that involved the villagers. Alaia and the others had fortunately enough been able to survive that danger, however, Dextro had been carved into their minds as someone they would never forgive.

The Sword in the Temple

“Before we talk, take these off me. They're just so uncomfortable.”

Dextro showed the shackles binding his hands and feet. Since he was an extremely dangerous man, they wouldn't bring Alaia to him without restraining him this much.

“Don't be stupid. We're not foolish enough to set you free.”

Flair rejected Dextro's demand. The reason was the same for restraining him, she couldn't put Alaia in any danger.

“Geez… you really are a thick headed woman. I won't do anything that would risk my life.”

Dextro shook the shackles around his hands and dropped his shoulders in an over exaggerated fashion. However, it seemed that was part of what he had expected, as Dextro showed no signs of caring and began explaining the circumstances for appearing in front of them.

“I came here to make a deal with you lot.”

“…A deal?”

Alaia narrowed her eyes, she felt something disturbing about Dextro's words.

“Yeah. I have some information you would find important. Moreover, it's incredibly urgent information. In exchange for telling you, I want you to accept my demands.”

“There is no way we would make a deal!”

Flair rejected Dextro's proposal once more. She would never make a deal with a despicable man. That was both for Alaia's sake, and for her own creed.

“What are your demands, Dextro?”

However, Alaia's judgement was the opposite of Flair's.

“Your highness!? You can't fall for this kind of man's sugar coated words!”

“Flair, taking the reason for why this man came here on his own into account, we won't lose anything from hearing what he has to say.”

Alaia knew just how calculating of a man Dextro was. And he had taken the risk of exposing himself to Alaia and the others. Since Alaia valued the lives of her citizens, she probably wouldn't kill him, but there was a chance that others would. In reality, even Flair thought of it. Despite knowing that, Dextro had come to make a deal. So the information must have been worth the risk.

“As expected from princess Alaia. You're different from this hard headed woman.”

“Dextro, you bastard!”

“Calm down, Flair.”

Alaia held back Flair and stepped up to Dextro. She was planning on hearing what he had to say.

“Tell me your demands, Dextro.”

“I only have one demand. I want you to protect my position, even if you were to win this war.”

“Your position?”

“Yeah.”

Dextro nodded and grinned as he said that.

“At first I thought it was only a matter of time before your reborn Forthorthe army would be dismantled, but now you've even taken over Raustor. Your numbers are still no match for

Maxfern's, but the same might not be said in the future. If you spread the rumor of that Blue Knight defeating a dragon, you would probably be able to gather even more soldiers."

"…So what about it?"

Flair glared at Dextro and he responded with a sneering.

"Kukuku, in other words, there's a chance you lot might win this war. I'd say you're 50/50."

"…I see, so that's why…"

Alaia realized the reason for why Dextro had appeared in front of them. Her expression then changed into an even more serious one.

"Honestly, I don't care what side wins, but if you lot do, I'd be in a bit of trouble. You would without a doubt put me on a trial, and punish me for war crimes. At worst, I might even get executed."

"Of course! That's what you deserve after what you've done!"

If Maxfern's coup d'état army were to lose, Dextro wouldn't just lose his position, but he would also be punished. His indiscriminate attack on the village would be considered as going too far, and he would subsequently be punished. It would depend on the trial, but he probably wouldn't be able to avoid the death penalty. If he was lucky, he'd spend the rest of his life behind bars. Either way, Dextro's future would be dark if Alaia's side was to win.

"So you're selling us information to buy amnesty in advance, huh?"

"Exactly, princess Alaia. I couldn't give a damn if you or Maxfern win. But, I want to save my own life. So don't you think it'd be in my interest to put myself in a secure spot, no matter who wins?"

By secretly selling information, Dextro would be able to avoid a trial in the case that Alaia's side won. By doing that, Dextro would be safe regardless of if Alaia or Maxfern won. That was why Dextro had appeared, knowing the risks. It had all been to save himself.

"You're saying the information is worth that much?"

"Precisely. Both for this army, and for you personally. But you better decide quickly, soon this information will be useless."

The information Dextro was trying to sell was urgent. Even if they didn't buy it, they would eventually find out what it was, but by that time it would already be too late. Dextro requested a swift judgement from Alaia. Would she let it happen or prevent it beforehand?

"…There is no other way. I will accept your deal."

After thinking for a while, Alaia decided to accept the deal. Since Dextro believed it was information worth enough to save his life, she couldn't just disregard it. In other words, she believed in Dextro's calculations.

"Your highness!"

Of course, Flair objected. Letting someone who would slaughter indiscriminately go free was unacceptable.

"I'm sorry, Flair. I just believe this would be the best for the people."

However, Alaia shook her head at Flair.

"Your highness…"

"Just endure it, Flair."

Alaia felt the same as Flair, however even then, she believed it was a necessary choice. She couldn't put the citizens at risk just for the sake of justice. She felt the same as she did that night at the harvest festival.

“You won't lose out on this. That's why it's a deal.”

Dextro nodded in satisfaction. Like he said, Dextro wasn't planning on having Alaia and the others lose out on the deal. She had to protect Dextro's position because it was a fair trade.

“The dragon that Blue Knight fought this morning… supposedly it's called Alunaya… anyways, that's actually Grevanas's puppet.”

“Impossible!? Are you saying that Grevanas can control something like that!?”

Flair's eyes shot wide open in surprise.

The head of the court magicians, Grevanas. He was one of the masterminds behind the coup d'état and could also be called Maxfern's right-hand man. However, even if Maxfern was the strongest of the court magicians and one of the arc-wizards, Flair couldn't believe that he could control Alunaya.

“Calm down, that's not the problem right now. The problem is what's next.”

Dextro told Flair to calm down, and began speaking a little faster as he felt pressed for time.

“Maxfern and Grevanas's goal has three stages. First they use that dragon to bring out that Blue Knight. Not even he would stay in one piece after fighting a dragon.”

Dextro looked around the room, Koutarou was nowhere to be found.

If I had followed the plan it might have worked, but… oh well, guess it can't be helped now…

Since it was only proper for Koutarou to take part in this situation, Dextro sensed that Maxfern's plan had been a success.

“In that situation, I would lead a force to assault the fort. By doing that, we wouldn't have to fight the Blue Knight. However, I gave all kinds of reasons to delay the march, so this attack won't happen.”

“Why did you delay it?”

“I didn't know if that Blue Knight was incapacitated or not. I don't have the courage of facing that Blue Knight in a fight. I'd just lose.”

The assault force led by Dextro wasn't all that large. It was a small force intended to invade the fort at night and sabotage. Because of that, if they were to face Koutarou, they would end up being repelled. Dextro had been planning on carrying out the attack if he could confirm Koutarou's state, but in the end, he didn't have enough information. So Dextro came up with various reasons to stop his force, and met with Flair on his own.

“Because of that, there will only be the third attack.”

“And that's?”

Alaia urged Dextro ahead. Her tone was faster, as if she was in a hurry. She had been feeling something ominous ever since the words Blue Knight left Dextro's mouth.

“…Having lowered his guard, even just a little, after fighting against the dragon, the Blue Knight will be assassinated.”

By the time Dextro finished speaking, Alaia was already running. It was almost as if she had forgotten about Dextro.

Part 2

Alaia was headed towards the infirmary where Koutarou was sleeping. Flair, Clan and Charl were all chasing after her. Leaving a few soldiers behind to guard Dextro, they chased after Alaia.

“Koutarou-sama!”

In contrast to her graceful appearance, she slammed opened the door and jumped into the room. In that moment, she could see what was going on in the infirmary.

The infirmary was in a wretched state.

There were two people on the floor: the army surgeon who worked here, and the guard who helped out with odd jobs. They were still alive but critically injured, and a large amount of their blood dyed the floor red.

Koutarou laid sleeping on the bed the furthest away from the entrance. Three men surrounded that bed. They were wearing Forthorthe army uniforms and holding swords dripped with blood. They had attacked the army surgeon and guard, and now they were going to attack Koutarou.

“I won't let you!”

Having realized the situation right away, Alaia rushed towards Koutarou at full speed. She desperately wanted to save Koutarou's life. She had completely forgotten how important her position and life was for Forthorthe. To Alaia, Koutarou was starting to become more important than Forthorthe.

“Your highness!? Damn, help me, Clan!”

Seeing Alaia rushing towards the assassins, Flair hurriedly drew a knife from her waist. And while asking for Clan's assistance, she threw the knife towards the assassin closest to Alaia.

“As lively as always!”

Clan had predicted this situation and already had her rifle ready. She quickly took aim and squeezed the trigger. A bullet shot out from the barrel and flew towards an assassin different from the one Flair had attacked.

“Guwah!?”

“Gyaaaa!”

Flair's knife and Clan's bullet disposed of one assassin each. Seeing that, the last assassin swung his sword down to fulfill his objective.

“Noooooooooooo!”

The riot in the room and Alaia's sorrowful shout woke up Koutarou.

“Mm… W-What!?”

As Koutarou opened his eyes he noticed the abnormal sight in front of him. Alaia was running to get in the way of the approaching silvery blade. The smell of blood filled the room as four people laid on the floor.

“Princess Alaia!?”

Having just woken up, Koutarou couldn't understand the situation. The only thing he knew was that at this rate, Alaia would be slashed and killed.

“As if I'd let youuuu!”

Fully intending to protect Alaia, Koutarou slammed his own fist into the oncoming blade.

The Sword in the Temple

A dull sound and collision. Koutarou's left fist hit the assassin's sword. Since it didn't hit the front of the blade, he wasn't cut, but his fist crashed into a mass of metal, breaking his bones. Koutarou took a lot of damage, but as a result, Alaia wasn't harmed. The sword's trajectory was altered and it only cut a little at Koutarou's foot.

“Koutarou-sama!”

The next moment, Alaia jumped on top of Koutarou's body and held him. She was desperately trying to keep Koutarou from being harmed.

“…”

The assassin's first attack had failed, but he quickly recovered and took aim for a part of Koutarou's body that Alaia wasn't able to cover. Because of the difference in size between Alaia and Koutarou, she wasn't able to cover up all of Koutarou's body. His arm, head, and most of his legs were visible. By aiming there, it would be easy to kill Koutarou, despite Alaia covering him.

“I won't let you do that!”

Clan's rifle blew out fire. As a result, the sword was blown away from the assassin's right hand. Clan's bullet shattered the sword and obstructed the assassin's actions.

However, the assassin didn't stop. Since his right hand had gotten numb from the impact and wouldn't move, he pulled a knife out with his left hand and attacked Koutarou.

“…Nice save, Clan.”

However, that was all the assassin was able to do. The tip of Flair's sword was pointed at his throat and completely blocked his movements. If he moved any further, Flair would surely cut his head clean off.

“This is…”

At that time, Flair was aghast when she saw the assassin's face. She recalled seeing him before. He was a coup d'état soldier that had defected to the reborn Forthorthe army just yesterday. Since Flair was in charge of the combat troops, she had seen his face when he applied.

Flair struck the assassin with the handle of her sword and made him faint, but her surprise still hadn't died down.

“Kukuku, this is what happens when you don't kill someone you've pointed your weapon towards. That Blue Knight is too naive.”

Dextro jeered. Since he was wearing shackles he had only arrived just now. However, since he knew of this assassination plan, he was well aware of what had surprised Flair.

“…I wouldn't be so sure.”

“Huh?”

“Look at it like this, I've tried to kill Bertorion in the past.”

Clan leaned her rifle on her shoulder and glared at Dextro. It was an expression Koutarou would surely call sly if he could see it.

“And because I was here, that giant was defeated… Who is the naive one here? You? Or Bertorion?”

“…Tsk.”

Dextro clicked his tongue. The steel giant he had made Koutarou fight had been pierced by Clan's beam cannon. That was a result of Koutarou not killing Clan and Dextro making light of

her. And being able to prevent this assassination plan was thanks to Koutarou not killing Dextro. So one could reason that Dextro was the naive one.

“…You're fine the way you are, Bertorion…”

Clan mumbled in a low voice and looked towards Koutarou. Despite the assassination having ended, Alaia was still firmly holding onto Koutarou. Her body was trembling and despite being injured, Koutarou gently patted her back. Charl worriedly watched over the two. And seeing that sight, Clan was once again able to confirm her belief.

“…That is the path of, you, the Blue Knight…”

That Koutarou was indeed the actual Blue Knight.

The Sword in the Temple

Part 3

The next time Koutarou woke up was three days later. It was a result of the disgusting medicine Lidith had given him, and his accumulated exhaustion and injuries.

“Where am I…?”

Having woken up, Koutarou looked around the area. The dim lamp wasn't lighting up the infirmary; instead it was Koutarou's room in the fort. With his treatment finished, he had been moved from the infirmary.

“Hm?”

The moment after Koutarou realized he was in his own room, he noticed a person by his side.

“…Princess Alaia!?”

Alaia was sitting on a chair next to Koutarou and leaning her body on his bed, fast asleep. On the table next to her was a container with liquid in it, bandages, a pitcher full of water and more. Seeing that, Koutarou realized that she had been attending him.

“Princess Alaia…”

She was grasping Koutarou's right hand with both of her hands. Even fast asleep, she was firmly holding on, as if she would never let go.

“Seems like I've made her worry quite a bit…”

Koutarou mumbled in a quiet voice and squeezed her hands back.

Alaia should be busy with her work as a princess, so she shouldn't have time to attend Koutarou. Despite that, Alaia had somehow made time and was now sleeping like this. She had been so worried about Koutarou she felt the need to do so.

The Sword in the Temple

The Sword in the Temple

“Mm, mmm…”

Noticing that Koutarou was moving his hand, Alaia woke up. She slowly opened her eyes for a few seconds and the next moment her body shot straight up.

“Koutarou-sama!?”

“Good morning, your highness.”

When she saw Koutarou smiling, her expression changed and tears began streaming down her eyes.

“Thank goodness… you woke up…”

“I'm sorry for making you worry, and for her highness to have treated me herself… I am truly honored.”

“That's fine! They were all injures you got for my sake! I should be the one apologizing and thanking you!”

Alaia hurriedly wiped her tears as she didn't want to become a burden to Koutarou. However, her tears kept streaming down no matter how much she wiped them away. Although Alaia might be able to fake her expression and tone, she couldn't manipulate her tears of relief.

“Your highness…”

Looking at Alaia like that, Koutarou felt truly grateful. Having the princess of a country worried for you was a very rare event. The only thing that saddened Koutarou was that those feelings were originally supposed to be for the real Blue Knight. As such, Koutarou felt a little guilty.

“…I'm sorry for crying like a little child, Koutarou-sama.”

Alaia didn't stop crying until a while later. With her mind cleared after crying her heart out, Alaia's normal calm smile reappeared.

“I'll be sure to remember that, it's an expression you don't see very often after all.”

“My… Koutarou-sama, you have quite a mean side to you.”

“I get that a lot.”

While looking at Alaia, who was slightly pouting, Koutarou remembered Harumi back on Earth.

“Satomi-kun, you meanie.”

While the two would cheerfully chat, Harumi would often condemn Koutarou by saying that. And the expression Alaia had right now was the same as Harumi's was.

Princess Alaia and Sakuraba Harumi really do look very similar…

Thanks to that sensation, Koutarou hadn't felt lonely these past few months. It wasn't just Alaia either; Charl, Flair and the others all reminded him of his companions on Earth in one way or another. As a result, Koutarou never felt lonely. He believed he had been incredibly lucky to have been sent to this time and place.

“By the way, Koutarou-sama.”

Alaia stopped pouting.

“How are you feeling?”

With her expression back to normal, Alaia worriedly looked at Koutarou's body. As she did, Koutarou nodded and smiled.

“I'm all better. It hurts in some places when I move, but the biggest problem is my empty stomach.”

While Koutarou was sleeping, treatment was continuously being performed. Thanks to Lidith's scientific methods, Caris's magic and Fauna's spiritual energy, Koutarou was quickly recovering. If he was to move, no part of his body would scream out in pain. As long as he ate something and let time pass, he would eventually fully recover.

“Oh my, Koutarou-sama…”

Alaia instinctively smiled as she heard Koutarou's tone of voice. After having been so worried about Koutarou, Alaia couldn't help but find Koutarou's innocent tone of voice funny.

“I-I'll have Mary prepare dinner right away, fu, fufufu.”

While laughing at Koutarou, Alaia confirmed the warmth in her hands.

I'm really glad… Koutarou-sama is safe…

Alaia confirmed her own feelings through the warmth of Koutarou's hand.

I… I definitely don't want to let Koutarou-sama die…

During these past few days, Alaia had learned just how much Koutarou meant to her.

The despair she had felt when Koutarou had been critically injured and carried into the fort. The irritation when she had heard about the assassins. The feelings she had as she threw her body in front of the assassin to protect Koutarou. The impatience when all she could do was watch Koutarou sleep. And the deep relief when Koutarou smiled again.

All those feelings supported Alaia. She definitely didn't want to Koutarou to die, no matter what price she herself had to pay.

Alaia knew that one day Koutarou would leave her. To the princess Alaia, marriage was just a tool in politics. No matter how much she loved him, there was never a chance of Alaia being able to marry Koutarou. But if she knew that Koutarou would continue living after they parted ways, she could stay strong.

So, for that sake…!

Alaia made up her mind, her determination was unwavering, and it even surpassed her desire to protect her country.

“Koutarou-sama, once you recover, there is someplace I want to take you to, would that be alright?”

As long as Koutarou was safe, she could protect the world on her own.

At this time, Alaia was being driven by that powerful emotion.

The Sword in the Temple

Part 4

Alaia took Koutarou to an empty temple in the mountains, some distance away from Raustor.

The name Raustor meant the goddess's resting place. Having traveled through infinite time and worlds, the goddess of dawn rested her feet in these lands.

With that legend, Raustor naturally became a religiously important place, and a lot of temples for the goddess of dawn were built. Alaia had taken Koutarou to one of those temples. It was the oldest of temples being managed directly by the Mastir family.

This temple was a very sturdy building made from stone. Thanks to that, the temple's appearance remained the same as it did when it was first built over 1,000 years ago. The only change in appearance would be the plants growing on the stone.

Fauna was the one who had guided Koutarou and Alaia here.

Fauna was a priestess of the goddess of the dawn, on top of that she has been Alaia's friend since the two went to seminars. Because of that, Alaia trusted Fauna, and she had been left in charge of this temple.

“Alaia-sama, Reios-sama, this way.”

“Thank you, Fauna.”

With Fauna in the front, they entered the temple. Since both Alaia and Fauna had been here several times, they didn't really think much of it.

“This is…”

However, Koutarou was different. As Koutarou entered the temple, he was taken aback by a strange sensation. He had been told in advance that this was a temple built for the goddess of dawn, and even if he hadn't, he could easily tell this place was sacred. However, that wasn't what Koutarou was feeling. This was more a sensation of deja vu.

Have I come to this place before…? Or is it this atmosphere that I remember…?

His sense of deja vu grew stronger the closer he got to the center. Koutarou himself felt like he knew of this place, or possibly the atmosphere surrounding this temple.

“I'm sorry for keeping you waiting. This is the place I wanted to take you.”

“…This statue…”

Koutarou's feelings changed into conviction when he reached his destination.

That destination was a large room made out of stone in the center of the temple. Many red glass panes had been fitted in the ceiling off the room, changing the light into the color of dawn. And in the center of the room was a stone statue lit up by the red light. Since the statue was placed on top of a large stand, Koutarou was looking up at it.

In Forthorthe, that statue was called the goddess of dawn. It had been made in the image of the goddess of creation, a motif of a girl with her hands clasped in front of her hands, praying. In the legends, the girl weeping in solitude turned her own tears into threads and began knitting the world. Because of that, tears had been carved into the statues face.

And surrounding the statue were several pillars. Transparent globes had been installed on the top of them, and light poured down on them from above, dying them red.

I… I know that statue and this place… but why? Why can't I remember it?

Koutarou was perplexed. He could recall having seen the sight, this girl, the goddess of dawn before. Despite that, he was completely unable to remember that event. Comparing his memory

to a photograph, it was like that part of his memory had been painted over. He could tell something was supposed to be there from the surrounding image, but he couldn't see it. This was an impatient and strange situation for Koutarou.

“Please come over here.”

Koutarou was spacing out as he stared at the statue when Alaia's voice snapped him back into reality. She was already in front of the statue, and she called out to Koutarou.

“Please go right away, Reios-sama.”

Next, Fauna called for Koutarou as well. She was standing by the entrance and gazed into the room. She was going to leave everything else to Alaia.

Fauna knew just why Alaia had taken Koutarou to this place. She was in charge of this temple, and at the same time a girl. For those two reasons, she wanted to keep leave Alaia and Koutarou on their own.

“I understand, I will.”

“…Okay.”

Koutarou was gently seen off by Fauna as he approached Alaia. Fauna retreated to the outside of the room and could no longer see Koutarou and Alaia. As such, Koutarou and Alaia were left alone in front of the statue.

“Thank you very much, Koutarou-sama.”

Having been left alone, Alaia used Koutarou's real name. Ever since Koutarou had told her the truth, she had used that name when they were alone.

“No… so what is this place, your highness? And why did we come here?”

Koutarou was full of questions. Since his own memories were so vague, he wanted to know more about this place.

“This is a special place to the royal family of Forthorthe. This country's treasure is being held here.”

“Country's, treasure…?”

Hearing Koutarou repeat her words, Alaia smiled and turned towards the statue's stand. She then placed her hand on the silver place installed in the stand. The following words were engraved in that plate.

'At the time of a true national crisis, recite thine true name'

They were characters Koutarou couldn't read, but the armor's system quickly translated them for him. They were from the ancient language that priests and magicians used.

“My name is Alaia. I am the silvery white snow of Mastir. The crown princess of Forthorthe, Alaia Kua Mastir Signaria Tia Forthorthe.”

The moment Alaia spoke her name, white light began shooting out from the plate. Eventually, it spread throughout the entire statue and lit up the goddess. As it did, the plate slid down and revealed what was behind it.

“This is… a sword…?”

Inside the stand was an old sword. The sword was stuck in the stand itself and it, along with the stand, began to slide out towards Koutarou and Alaia.

The Sword in the Temple

When the sword had first been placed in the stand, it had a beautiful polish and sparkle, but now the blade and handle were all rusty. It had lost its original splendor and now only looked like a piece of junk.

“Yes. It has been passed down the royal family for generations. It's been told it was given to the royal family by the goddess of dawn herself. The very existence of this sword is proof of the legitimacy of the Forthorthe royal family, and at the same time, the power of this sword has protected the country from its enemies.”

Alaia explained herself proudly up until this point, but then her expression turned darker.

“However… this sword itself was often the cause of conflict, and 200 years ago it was sealed away here.”

The owner of this sword was seen as the emperor of Forthorthe. Because of that, a lot of fights broke out for this sword, and a lot of blood was spilled.

That was when the emperor several generations ago hid the sword. At the same time, the court magicians were mobilized and tasked with creating a powerful seal to keep the sword from falling into the wrong hands. The only ones who could break this seal were those of the royal bloodline. On top of that, not even royalty was allowed to touch the sword outside of a true national crisis.

“So that's what you meant by the country's treasure… but, pardon my words, it doesn't look like it holds that kind of power…”

Koutarou understood Alaia's story, however what was in front of him was just a rusted stick of metal. It didn't look like very special at all.

“Fufufu, I'm sure it does in this state.”

Alaia let out a small laugh and turned towards the sword again. And like the statue in front of her, she clasped her hands, closed her eyes and began praying.

“Past, present and future, oh mother of all things, goddess of dawn.”

Alaia began speaking the ancient language in a sonorous voice.

As she did, a shrill noise, like metal hitting metal filled the room, and Alaia's forehead began shining.

“Your highness… what is…”

Before Koutarou knew it, a sword crest had appeared on Alaia's forehead and light shot out from it.

“A descendant of Forthorthe, your faithful servant asks of thee. Now is the time to break the seal, and give us power to overcome this crisis.”

Alaia was using an incantation to dispel the seal placed on the sword. That incantation and her royal blood were the keys to removing the seal.

“Wind of the heavens. Green of the ground. Water of the sea. Fire of the mountain. Using my life as provision, reveal the power to unify all things!”

The light shining from Alaia slowly filled up the sword. And as the light touched the sword, the touched part regained its appearance from the past.

The rust that had covered the sword vanished, like it had been blown away by the wind, and the once rusted, warped blade regained its former glory. The dirty and scratches vanished and the sword shone silver. The sword had such a beautiful sheen it looked like it had just been forged.

“My name is Alaia! The silvery white snow of Mastir! Oh holy sword of the temple, carve my name into your blade and revive!”

The Sword in the Temple

When Alaia loudly declared that, the sword practically exploded with pure-white light. That light was a transformed portion of the sword's power flowing out. That massive power shook the temple.

It continued on for several dozen seconds. Once that time had passed, the swords light slowly weakened, before vanishing, as if it had been absorbed by the sword itself. However, though the light may have vanished, the swords rusted appearance didn't return. The sword still had a beautiful sheen as it was enshrined in front of Koutarou and Alaia.

“Koutarou-sama.”

Alaia grabbed the handle of the sword as if nothing had happened. And after she held up the sword in both hands, she turned back to Koutarou.

“This sword is given the name of the person who dispels the seal.”

The sword crest on Alaia's forehead was still there, and like the sword in her hands, its blade had a silver sheen. That was the proof that she had dispelled the seal. It was a bond that tied her to the sword.

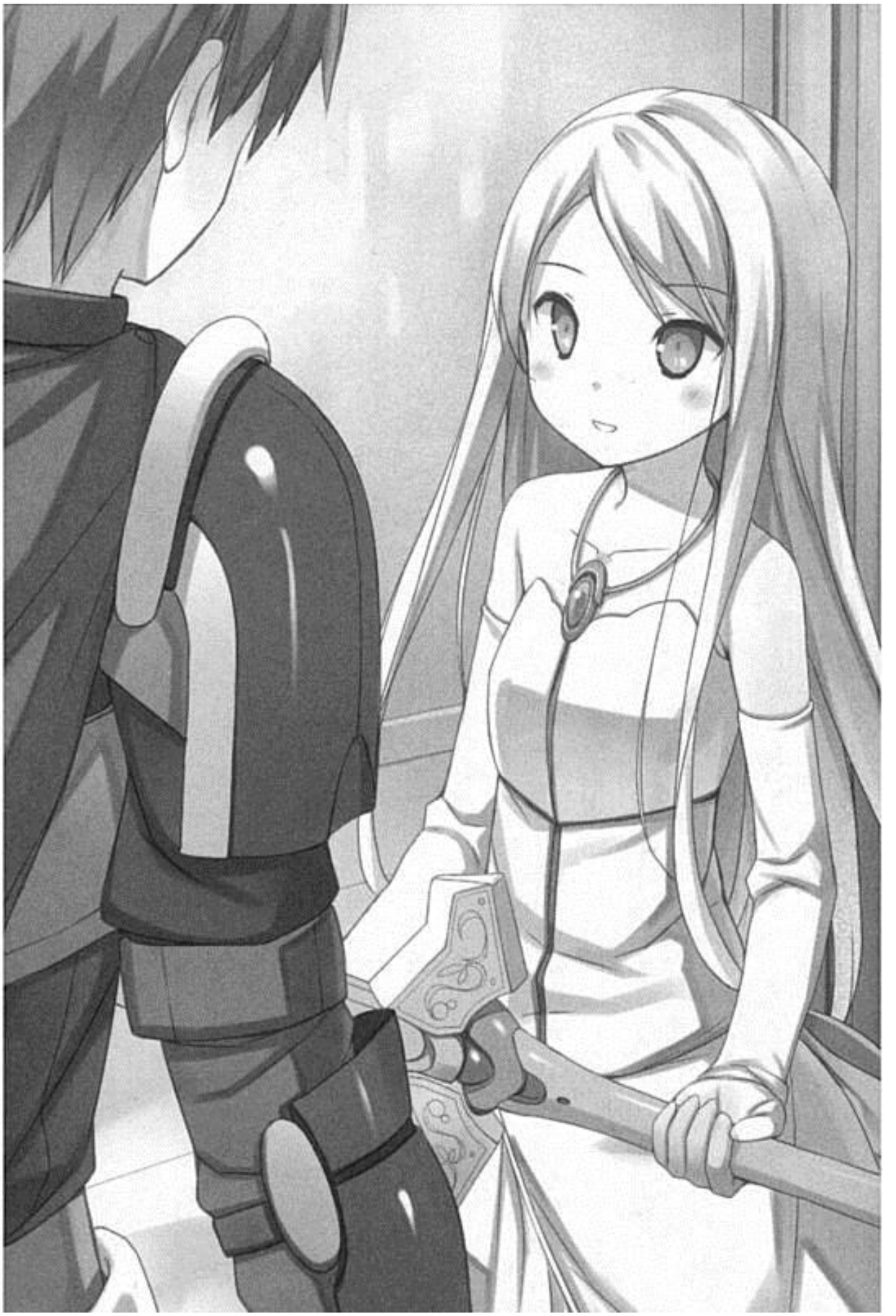
“Because of that, this sword is given my name.”

Alaia then presented the sword to Koutarou. And at the same time she proudly stated the name of the sword.

“This sword's name is Signaltin. It means silvery white sword.”

That was the name of the most famous sword in the legend of the Blue Knight.

The Sword in the Temple



The Sword in the Temple

“This is… Signaltin…”

Koutarou was surprised. He knew that Signaltin existed, but he didn't think it would appear in front of him at this time. In the manuscript Theia had written, there had been very little mention concerning magic, so the sword had been easily obtained.

“Please take this, Koutarou-sama.”

Alaia was planning on giving the sword to Koutarou. As long as he held this sword, Koutarou would never lose. And as long as Koutarou was alive, Alaia could stay strong. She believed this was the best option for both herself and for Forthorthe.

“N-No, I can't take something so important…”

However, Koutarou couldn't simply accept something like that. He could tell that the sword held immense power after seeing the ritual to dispel the seal. Because of that he couldn't easily accept it. And what's more, this sword was the treasure of the royal family. That fact also stopped Koutarou from accepting it.

“It's okay.”

Since Koutarou had reacted just like she had expected, Alaia smiled and gently shook her head.

As I thought, I should leave this sword to Koutarou-sama…

Convinced that her choice was correct, Alaia revealed her feelings.

“In return, promise me one thing.”

“Eh?”

“Koutarou-sama, when you return to your own world, make sure you bring this sword with you.”

“I-I can't do that, your highness!”

Since Alaia's request was so unexpected, Koutarou's eyes shot wide open in surprise. His surprise was even greater than when Signaltin had appeared.

“It is best for you to keep it. This sword will become a source of conflict. We know full well what fate a country that relies on an overwhelming power meets. That's why this sword was sealed.”

In contrast to Koutarou, Alaia was calm. She watched over Koutarou with a gentle expression and continued speaking.

“And the safest way would be to take it away from this world. By doing that, this country will never fight over this sword again.”

Just like Alaia was trying to protect Koutarou, she was trying to protect Forthorthe.

The existence of Signaltin had caused several civil wars. Because of its strong power, there were countless people after this sword, aiming to become the emperor. It wasn't very different from terrorists in the current age trying to gain control through the use of powerful weapons.

Though the conflict may have stopped once the sword was sealed in this temple, there was no guarantee that it would stay that way. The ideal would be to place the sword somewhere far away where no one could get their hands on it. However, that kind of opportunity hadn't shown itself until now. That opportunity had appeared in front of Alaia, in the form of Koutarou, who came through time from the world of stars. And he would be sure to do it.

“If Koutarou-sama were to take it, the people of this world would lose the chance to seize hold of this sword. This is the perfect chance for us.”

This sword would protect her loved ones, subjugate the traitors and in the end, by parting with it, it would protect her country. To Alaia, there was no action more meaningful than this.

“I see… so that's why…”

That was the true reason behind why the Silver Princess had given the Blue Knight the sword, and why he had then vanished. It wasn't just because the existence of the ultimate hero, the Blue Knight, was making Forthorthe's political situation unstable. This sword was also one of the causes of instability. That's why the Blue Knight had vanished; to erase the name of the hero and the powerful sword from Forthorthe.

“I understand, your highness. I will humbly accept that role.”

Having realized the situation, Koutarou decided to accept the sword. It was a job he had to do as the replacement for the Blue Knight, and he felt he could do a better a job than the Blue Knight by taking the sword back to Earth.

“Thank you very much, Koutarou-sama!”

Alaia felt an immense joy when Koutarou accepted the sword. With this, everything will go well. That was Alaia's hope, and at the same time her powerful driving force.

“…Koutarou-sama. From now on this sword will protect you. From any enemy and any trial.”

“Then I will use my life and this sword to protect you, princess Alaia…”

Like that, Koutarou got Signaltin, and the gears of fate continued turning.

On the night after Koutarou and Alaia returned to Raustor with Signaltin, Alaia was in her office, suffering from an intense vertigo.

“Kuh, Ummh.”

Almost losing her balance, Alaia leaned her body towards the wall. If she didn't she would fall right away.

“Your highness!”

Fauna who was in the room noticed that and hurriedly ran up to Alaia to hold her. She had been worried that Alaia's body might suffer from ill effects after breaking the seal, and had stayed by her side.

“T-Thank you, Fauna… you're a big help…”

“Please stay still, your highness. I'll heal you right away.”

Fauna sat Alaia down on the sofa, and attempted to treat her using her spiritual energy. Alaia's body had grown horribly weak. However, the spiritual energy being poured into Alaia didn't seem to have much of an effect.

“I feel like a weight has been taken off my shoulders. Thank you, Fauna.”

However even then, after a while, color returned to Alaia's face. With the order of her mind and body restored, Alaia smiled and thanked Fauna. Alaia was really lucky to have a friend like Fauna at a time like this.

“Your highness… didn't you give that sword, Signaltin, too much of your life?”

Alaia was growing weaker, like a sick person. That was because she had used more than half of her life as payment to revive Signaltin. When breaking the seal, the more life paid the more power the sword would hold. Because of that, Alaia had poured as much of her life as she could into the sword. The crest on her forehead was proof of that; even now, half of her life resided in Signaltin.

“It's fine that way.”

The Sword in the Temple

Alaia's health had deteriorated as a result of the life sacrificed, but her expression had no signs of regret. If anything it was quite the opposite. She felt satisfied having accomplished something important.

“By doing this, I can always stay by Koutarou-sama's side.”

Alaia was fated to never be intertwined with Koutarou. However, with Signaltin by Koutarou's side, her life would forever draw closer to him. As her position wouldn't allow for her to speak it out loud that was the only way Alaia could express her love.

“Princess Alaia…”

Fauna couldn't say anything. When faced with Alaia's deep and calm but intense expression of love, the one word she could speak was Alaia's name.

“Even if… if he were to return to the other side of that endless time and countless distance…”

No matter the time or distance separating Alaia from Koutarou, she would forever be with him.

That was just how satisfied Alaia was.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

Part 1

Ever since Koutarou obtained Signaltin, the reborn Forthorthe army's advance had been unstoppable.

The rumor of Koutarou repelling the fire dragon emperor, Alunaya, spread throughout Forthorthe like a wildfire, and even more people and supplies gathered for them. At this rate, the Forthorthe army would come out victorious. As a result, the band of knights that were still on the fence joined the Forthorthe army one after another, and their forces drastically increased. Their force was now more than capable of taking on the coup d'état army.

Meanwhile, the coup d'état's forces were constantly diminishing. The worry that they would lose to an opponent who could repel dragons and still carry on strong spread throughout the coup d'état army. As a result, morale dropped and a lot of people defected. If Alunaya, who had gone missing, reappeared, they would probably be able to overturn their current situation, but there was no sign of that happening. Because of that, the coup d'état's army situation kept deteriorating.

Even though there was almost no difference in their forces, with a low morale, even winnable wars would be lost. While the Forthorthe army's proficiency increased, the coup d'état army was ill prepared and they lost battles all over the country. And that just made the situation even worse.

As a result, the reborn Forthorthe army was able to smoothly advance without Koutarou even needing to use Signaltin. Because of that, by the time the first snowflake fell, the Forthorthe army was approaching the capital, Fornorn.

Koutarou and Clan were staring at the 3D image created by Clan's bracelet. There, they could see a brick cityscape. In the modern age, it would be considered old-fashioned, but in this age, it was beautiful and without peer. As expected of the capital of an imperial country; the villages and towns they had seen were nothing compared to this.

“So this is the capital Fornorn huh… it's quite large.”

“It's the largest city on this continent. It's equipped with water and sewage, and I've even heard there are street lights.”

The population of Fornorn was over 100,000. When compared to historical cities on Earth it was a very large city. Before the invention of the steam engine, there was a limit to how large a city could become compared to the modern age. Because of that, a population of 100,000 in this age was more than enough to call Fornorn a metropolis.

And because it was a such a large city, the force stationed there was large. Since it was the capital, around 10,000 soldiers should be waiting for them. If the coup d'état army was to mobilize all their forces, that number could become several times larger, but since those forces were busy suppressing riots and maintaining the borders, their number wouldn't rise past 10,000. Even then that was quite the force.

“Still… it's strange.”

“That's true. Why haven't they deployed any soldiers?”

“Who knows… but it would be troublesome if they used a scorched earth strategy…”

The reborn Forthorthe army had deployed to surround the city portion of Fornorn. Their numbers were around 8,000, but with reinforcement on the way, that number would be closer to 10,000.

Despite that, the coup d'état army showed no signs of intercepting them. They should have around 10,000 men, but they hadn't been deployed. They hadn't even set up a position to defend.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

“Princess Alaia doesn't want that kind of battle.”

“How rude, the same is true for me too.”

“Sorry, Clan.”

“Just how long is it going to take for you to acknowledge that I am a princess?”

“I said I'm sorry.”

What Koutarou and Clan worried about was that the coup d'état army had deployed their soldiers inside the city. If that was the case, there would be a lot of damage if a battle were to occur, and there would be no point in attacking Fornorn. If the capital was reduced to ashes so the masterminds behind the coup d'état could be captured, the damage done would be worse than when the coup d'état had happened.

“More importantly, if that's their goal, we need to find a way to attack the palace.”

“…More importantly huh? Geez… Repairs on the Cradle will be finished soon. If we use that, it might be possible.”

“Alright… gather some more information Clan. You should focus on the barracks.”

“I understand. I'll gather more in-depth information before the reconnaissance team returns.”

Because of those circumstances, Koutarou and the others were careful in attacking Fornorn. Considering what would happen after the war, it wasn't enough to repress the coup d'état army. That was the tricky part in civil wars: if they fought in a way that could lead to further riots or uprisings, the civil war would never end. Both Forthorthe and Earth's history proved that.

“Your Excellency!”

At that time, the young man who served as Koutarou's adjutant jumped into Koutarou and Clan's tent. Normally he wouldn't do something like that, he would always stop by the entrance. So the very fact that he had entered the tent meant that something serious had happened.

“Calm down, what happened?”

Koutarou asked the young man what was the matter. He could tell that it was something important, but he wouldn't be able to understand with his adjutant panicking. In order to settle him down, Koutarou replied in a calm tone.

“W-Well, the coup d'état army has surrendered!”

“What!?”

“W-What!?”

However, upon hearing his report, neither Koutarou nor Clan could remain calm.

The reason the coup d'état army had surrendered was because the masterminds, Maxfern and Grevanas, were absent.

Maxfern and Grevanas had vanished a few days ago and had never been seen since. At the same time, the alchemists and court magicians had vanished as well. They had left, taking only their protégés with them.

They had left the coup d'état army without leaving any specific orders. Like a child who had grown tired of a toy, they didn't seem to care anymore.

“…And since we don't want to go to battle either, we are now surrendering.”

“Even if you say that, it's hard to believe…”

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

Though the coup d'état army's messenger had explained the circumstances, Koutarou was perplexed. He understood what the messenger was saying, but it was hard for him to take that as the truth.

“I can understand that you feel that way. But it is the truth.”

The coup d'état army's messenger seemed to be perplexed by the situation as well. And he had been desperately attempting to make Koutarou understand that.

“Your Excellency, I have sent troops to confirm it. What he said is all true. Maxfern and the others are nowhere to be found in the palace, and the alchemist research facilities and the magician's tower were empty as well.”

The adjutant had confirmed that the messenger was speaking the truth.

“Hmm… I understand. It seems like a problematic situation for both sides.”

“I am glad you understand.”

Even though it was an incomprehensible situation, it was the truth. Maxfern and Grevanas had abandoned the coup d'état army and vanished.

“Clan.”

Having understood the situation, Koutarou beckoned Clan over. Once she came closer, Koutarou whispered to her.

“…What's going on? This is completely different from the manuscript.”

“…I don't know either. According to history, the Blue Knight fought against Maxfern and Grevanas.”

In both Theia's manuscript and in Forthorthe's history, the Blue Knight fought Maxfern and Grevanas. Though there were differences in how the battle developed in each history book, the fact that they fought was the truth.

Despite that, even though they had made it to the capital, Maxfern and Grevanas were nowhere to be seen. Theia's manuscript had been written using a history book where the final battle took place at Fornorn. And based on how history progressed, that was natural. Because of that, this end was unexpected.

“…If history is different from the manuscript, what happens next?”

“…It doesn't feel right, but Alaia has to become empress, so let's start working towards that.”

“…Alright, let's do that.”

After his private talk with Clan, Koutarou informed the messenger.

“We will accept the coup d'état's surrender. Prepare to let us in right away.”

“T-Thank you very much, your Excellency!”

Hearing Koutarou's answer, the messenger’s expression brightened up.

He himself was confused by the current situation. There was a chance that Koutarou wouldn't believe him and suspect that it might be a trap, so he had come knowing he might be killed. So he was truly relieved. With this, the war was over and he could return to his family. Those emotions turned to tears and streamed down his cheeks.

“Geez…”

Koutarou let out a small sigh and dropped his shoulders. Seeing that, Clan furrowed her brows.

“It's still too early to relax, Bertorion.”

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

“Well, I know, but… it's better that the war ends.”

“That's true. It's not like I don't understand how you feel.”

No matter how many times he experienced it, Koutarou couldn't get used to war. He felt it was best if he could carry on without fighting anymore. Though the change in history bothered him, Koutarou still couldn't help but feel relieved. The same was true for Clan; though she said not to relax, she was secretly relieved as well.

However, the battle wouldn't end yet.

“Bertorion, this is terrible!”

The atmosphere in the tent was becoming more relaxed as they could see the end of the war. That was when Flair jumped in with the blood drained from her face.

“Princess Alaia and princess Charl have been kidnapped by Maxfern!”

Flair delivered a message that would raise the curtain to the final battle.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

Part 2

While Koutarou and the others had been distracted by the capital, Maxfern had ambushed Alaia's forces that were positioned in the rear. With the entirety of the coup d'état army left in Fornorn, nobody expected an ambush at this timing.

Maxfern had used a flock of abnormal-looking winged monsters to attack. They had been summoned by Grevanas and his court magicians, and attacked Alaia and her forces at their command. Suffering an attack from the sky by an army that shouldn't exist, the reborn Forthorthe army was broken up and Alaia and Charl were kidnapped.

Alongside Alaia and Charl, Mary and Fauna had also been kidnapped as they were all in the same tent.

After that, Maxfern left the Forthorthe army an odd message. It stated that Koutarou should come to the castle at Nariachal without moving the army.

“Oh yeah, what kind of place is the castle at Nariachal?”

While riding on a horse, Koutarou called out to Lidith who was nearby. The name Nariachal hadn't appeared in Theia's manuscript, so Koutarou was unfamiliar with it.

“Nariachal is northwest of Fornorn. It's an old castle that the Maxfern family used to manage. It fell out of use around the time Fornorn was being built, and now it should be empty.”

Lidith answered Koutarou's question while skillfully controlling her horse. She was a far better rider than Koutarou was. Thanks to that, she was able to dexterously match Koutarou's speed while speaking.

“It's without a doubt a trap, Bertorion.”

Clan was riding together with Flair on another horse as she could only make a horse walk at best. She wasn't the best at physical activities after all. Clan was desperately holding onto Flair trying not to fall off. But even as she did that, she was still worried for Koutarou.

“They're going to kill Alaia-san and the others either way. They probably just want to get rid of you before that.”

To Maxfern and Grevanas who had started this coup d'état, Alaia and Charl were just a nuisance. To them, killing both would be the most efficient way for their coup d'état to succeed. So Alaia and Charl would be killed eventually. It didn't matter if Koutarou came or not.

Currently, Koutarou was in more danger than Alaia and Charl. If Alaia and Charl were to die, Koutarou, as the army commander, could declare an avenging battle and things would become troublesome for the masterminds. It was possible that the Forthorthe army would gain momentum, rather than lose it. In order to avoid that, it would be better if it was uncertain whether Koutarou, Alaia and Charl were alive or dead. Even if they were actually dead, by making the people believe that they might still be alive, they could avoid the citizens’ feelings concentrating on one point.

“However, I won't let them do that! No matter what happens, I'll save the princesses! Even if I were to lose my life!”

Flair's expression filled with rage and she whipped her horse. Her rage was intense. Since she was always so serious, she held a strong hate for Maxfern who had taken her highly esteemed master hostage.

“Please calm down, Lord Pardomshiha. If I let you die, princess Alaia will scold me.”

“But Bertorion, there's no point in being careful if princess Alaia and princess Charl were to die!”

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

Flair was in a rush. To her, something that should never happen had occurred. So not a trace of composure could be found in the normally dignified girl.

“Slow your horse down a little please, Lord Pardomshiha. At this rate, your horse will pass out before we get there.”

“…Ugh, s-sorry…”

Flair blushed a little, listened to Koutarou's advice and slowed down. If she hurried her horse too much, she would end up not reaching their destination. And if Flair tried too hard, she wouldn't be able to accomplish her goal either. Realizing that she was getting too flustered, Flair admonished herself.

“Still, what are we going to do, Blue Knight?”

Caris who was sitting on a flying cane came up next to Koutarou. In her case, she was better at flying with her cane than riding on a horse. She was flying backwards as she faced Koutarou.

“If we keep going like this, we'll walk right into their trap. And there's just the five of us. There's a limit to what we can do.”

In total there were five people heading towards Nariachal; Koutarou, Lidith, Flair, Clan and Caris. There numbers were far too few to save a princess. And knowing that they were heading into a trap, anyone would be worried, not just Caris.

“Well, I guess we can't get too hung up on details… Clan.”

“What's with that face?”

Clan was instinctively worried when she saw Koutarou's serious expression. At times like these, Koutarou would always say something reckless.

“You didn't come up something stupid again, did you?”

“It might be. Clan, we can't be picky in this situation. We'll need to use any method we can to save princess Alaia and the others.”

“…Are you sure?”

Clan pointed at the surrounding girls with her eyes. Any method meant using all equipment onboard the Cradle. That would be the same as just telling Flair and the others who they are. It was on a completely different level from being seen flying and using some advanced weaponry. Doing that, the chances of not being able of returning to their own world were very high.

“Yeah. The end is near, and it's just like Caris said. There's a limit to what we can do with just five of us.”

“…I understand.”

Clan nodded her head. Though there was a risk, Clan believed that Koutarou's decision was correct. They could trust Flair and the others, and they did have too few people. They would rather accept the risk of having their identities found out than losing Alaia and Charl.

“And prepare that too, we might need it.”

“T-That too!? I'm still in the process of adjusting it and—”

“Like I said, we can't get too hung up on details.”

Koutarou grinned as he said that. It was a mean smile he would show when telling Clan a dark joke, but this time it was a little different. Seeing that face, it hit Clan.

“…Bertorion, could you possibly be unbelievably angry?”

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

It looked like Koutarou was behaving calmly to Clan. However, she could sense an intense rage hidden behind his smile. Maxfern and Grevanas had touched something that they shouldn't have.

“No, I'm calm.”

Koutarou touched the insignia of rank on his chest as he said that.

“…Calm is it… Geez, this might not end so well…”

Now, Clan was certain that Koutarou was angry. He was only acting calm so that he wouldn't worry the people around them.

I see, there was no way I ever had a chance of winning against such a nonsensical man…

Koutarou must have been the same when she had fought him. Having realized the reason for her own defeat, Clan could sense that the battle they were riding towards was going to be fierce.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

Part 3

Having been taken to the old castle at Nariachal, Alaia and the others were confined in its dungeon. However, after spending some hours in the dungeon, they had been taken to the castle's garden.

It was a very lonely garden. Since it was positioned between the gate and the castle, it had a lot of plants and statues in the past, colorfully greeting the visitors. However since this castle hadn't been used for a long time, there had been no people to maintain it, and the garden was in ruins. The plants had all withered, the sculptures were cracked, and sand had filled the fountain. The ruined garden over 100 meters long was exceptionally lonely.

Alaia and the others were brought onto the garden and bound to wooden stakes driven into the ground. The binds were strong, and Alaia and the others had no hope of breaking free. In that situation, it was hard to remain calm. This situation was especially taxing on the young Charl.

“…What's going to happen to us now?”

Filled with anxiety, Charl let out a small sigh and furrowed her brows. Seeing that, Fauna and Mary smiled and encouraged Charl.

“We'll be fine! There's no way these villains can do anything!”

“That's right, Reios-sama will definitely come save us!”

That was all the girls could do as they were unable to move.

“I know! I know that! But…”

“Charl… you are scared that Reios-sama will come, are you not?”

Alaia was painfully aware of how Charl felt. Neither Alaia nor Charl doubted that Koutarou would come save them. That's why they were scared.

“Sister! Blue Knight is an idiot, so he'll definitely come! And he'll be killed trying to save us!”

“Charl…”

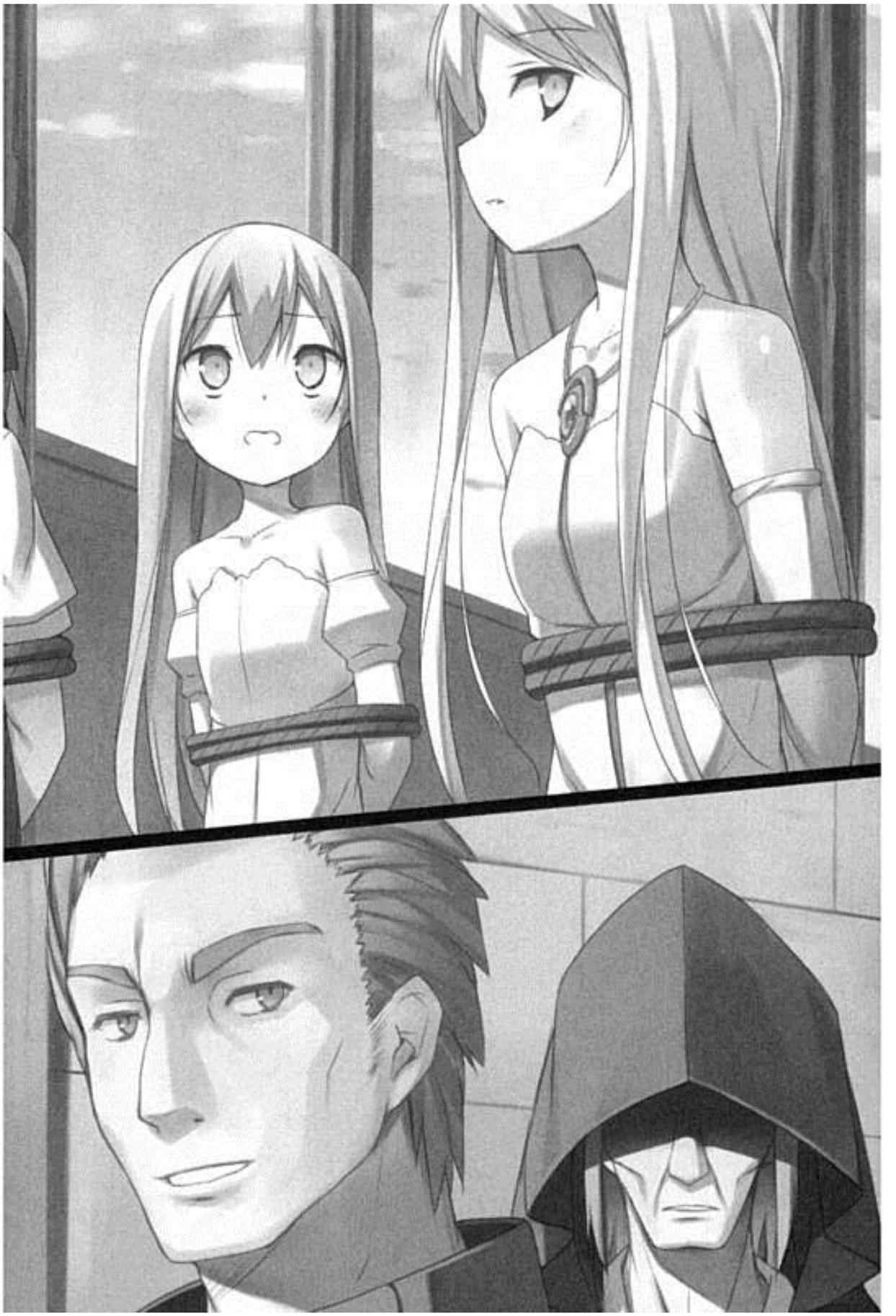
Koutarou wouldn't be able to do anything if Alaia and the others were used as hostages. Koutarou would face danger for their sake, and would most likely be killed. That was the unavoidable truth, and that terrified the two.

“It will be fine, Charl. Reios-sama will definitely win. Our Blue Knight won't die that easily.”

Alaia continued speaking to Charl as if trying to convince herself.

However, Alaia believed otherwise. Koutarou would definitely come, and then let himself be killed without putting up a fight. Alaia knew just what kind of person Koutarou was. That's why she loved him. However, she couldn't tell her little sister, who was trembling in anxiety, that Koutarou would likely be killed.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight



The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

Please, don't come, Koutarou-sama… I wouldn't mind, no matter the reason…

All Alaia could do was pray. She suppressed the feelings of wanting to cry and desperately tried to show Charl a smile.

“There's no need to worry, princess Alaia, princess Charl. As long as the Blue Knight listens to us, there won't be a need to kill him.”

“Maxfern!”

Before they knew it, Maxfern appeared besides Alaia and the others. Biorbaram Maxfern, he had been a minister of Forthorthe for a long while. However, he had been the person who killed Alaia's parents and brought war on the country. In front of a person like that, not even Alaia could conceal her anger. Alaia's smile vanished in an instant and she glared at Maxfern with a harsh expression.

“You're full of lies…”

“That's not true.”

Maxfern brushed off Alaia's glare and showed what looked to be a tender smile at first glance. However, it was obvious that it was just for show.

“As long as the Blue Knight agrees to our demands, it'll be impossible for him to bring harm to us. A lion has no reason to crush a single ant.”

At this time, Maxfern was overflowing with strange confidence. He was convinced of his own victory. And he didn't seem to be interested in Koutarou's life. His tone and behavior sounded that confident.

Where does this confidence come from…?

Alaia felt something eerie about that and was at loss of words at the unspeakable uneasiness.

“Maxfern-sama, it seems the knight in question has come.”

The nearby former head of the court magicians, Grevanas, pointed towards the gate on the other side of the garden.

“So you've come, Blue Knight… fufufu, he's an exemplary knight alright. How excellent…”

Looking in the direction Grevanas had pointed, Maxfern laughed, satisfied. The time he had been waiting for had come.

“Blue Knight!”

“…Ah… Koutarou-sama… why…”

By the wide open large gate was a knight in blue armor. Alaia could tell it was Koutarou, even from afar.

Koutarou had come here alone. After getting off his horse, Koutarou looked around the garden. During that time, Koutarou and Alaia's eyes met for an instant. During that instant, Koutarou showed a gentle smile before quickly returning to his serious expression. Koutarou knew that now wasn't the time to be happy.

“You can't, Reios-sama! This is a trap!”

Koutarou walked straight towards the center of the garden. His steps were slow but firm. Because of that, Alaia could tell just what kind of resolution Koutarou had when he had come here.

“Don't bother with us! Maxfern will kill us anyways!”

Despite knowing that, Alaia shouted. She was desperately trying to stop Koutarou.

“Please don't worry, I'll save all of you soon.”

However, Koutarou wouldn't stop. He continued walking without breaking rhythm and he had now reached the center of the garden.

“…I see he's brought that.”

Once Koutarou got closer, Maxfern stared at him for a moment before smiling and stroking his beard.

“It looks like it. I can detect its magic.”

The magician, Grevanas, wasn't looking at Koutarou with just his eyes, but also with his magic. He could see dense magic power filling Koutarou's body. Everything seemed to be going just like Maxfern and Grevanas had planned.

“Confirm if it's the real deal or not, right away.”

“As you wish.”

Grevanas raised his hand. As he did, an absurd looking creation appeared.

It had the body of a carnivorous animal standing upright, its head looked similar to a reptile’s and on its back were large wings. It was an absurd appearance that looked like several creatures mixed together. It was a creature that Grevanas and his court magicians had summoned from a different world they called Hell.

“Go!”

Grevanas swung his hand down towards Koutarou. The monster flapped with its large wings and flew into the air. Those wings weren't just for show.

“W-What's that!?”

Koutarou only first noticed the monster's existence when it flew up. Even he was at a loss for words when he saw its absurd appearance. However, Koutarou had seen all kinds of creatures since he had come to Forthorthe. The horses had horns, and the lizards had wings. And a while ago he had seen a giant dragon. As a result, he had built up somewhat of a resistance towards strange creatures.

“I see, so that's the demon that kidnapped her highness and the others!”

Koutarou had heard about the bizarre monster, the demon, from the men in Alaia's force. A flock of beasts that walked upright and flew across the sky had kidnapped Alaia and the others. Their description matched this creature perfectly.

“However, it's not something I can't defeat!”

Because of those various circumstances, Koutarou drew his sword without flinching.

Compared to that dragon, this demon is nothing! Besides, I have this sword!

The sword Koutarou had drawn was Signaltin. His new power, given to him by Alaia.

“Hyaaaaaaaah!”

The demon screeched loudly, flapped it large wings and charged towards Koutarou.

“Bring it!”

Koutarou shouted right back and pointed his sword towards the demon. As he did, the silver sword felt Koutarou's will to fight and began shooting pure-white light.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

A pulse… I see, this is from princess Alaia…

Koutarou could feel a gentle warmth from the light. He had a recollection of that sensation. It was the same warmth he had felt during their dance, and when he had been injured, when they had held hands.

“You're quite unlucky—”

Koutarou was confident that while this light was still glowing, he couldn't lose. There was no way he could, because Alaia was at his side, protecting him.

“—I'm in an extremely bad mood today!”

Koutarou swung his sword down with all of his might. His target was the demon's face. He was aiming for a counter attack as the demon thrust towards him with its mouth wide open.

“Hyaaaaaah! Gugegegege!”

However, the demon's movements were swift. It skillfully moved its wings and tail, dodging Koutarou's attack. As a result, Koutarou's attack merely scratched the demon's tail.

“It missed!?”

“Gegege, gegege.”

The demon that had escaped into the sky looked down on Koutarou and ridiculed him, taunting him, as if saying that his attacks would never connect.

“…Quite impressive.”

Koutarou looked up at the demon and felt admiration. However, that wasn't directed towards the demon's quickness. No, Koutarou felt admiration for something else.

“Huhyah!? Gyaoo!?

That was when the demon noticed what Koutarou was looking at, and that was its own tail. Strangely enough, about several dozen centimeters had disappeared off the demon's tail.

“Gugaaaa, Hyaaaaaaaah!”

What's more, that disappearance was continuing even now. The section of the tail was shining white, and its glow was gradually melting the tail. The light eventually ate up the demon's body and spread to the demon's body.

“Guga, Aaaaaa, Gugyaaaa! Ga—”

The demon's screams suddenly stopped. It couldn't scream, even if it wanted to. The light had devoured the demon's entire body and now only its head remained. The demon tried to let out a fearful scream, but without a throat, it could no longer do so. Eventually, even the demons head disappeared. All there was left behind was a handful of ash. And as it fell towards the ground, it was blown away by the wind.

Maxfern, who was watching that spectacle excitedly turned to Grevanas.

“Grevanas, did that demon die?”

“No.”

In contrast to Maxfern, Grevanas was calm, and he explained what had just happened.

“When a demon is summoned into this world, it creates a body by hardening magic power. That sword eliminated that magic and forcibly sent the demon back to hell.”

“Forcibly sent back to hell from just a scratch… how interesting.”

“Of course, it might die as a reaction from that…”

“Either way, what splendid power! It's beyond expectation.”

“Yes. It seems to be the genuine sword.”

Despite their subordinate demon being defeated, neither Maxfern nor Grevanas were shaken. If anything, they almost seemed happy.

“Just what are you doing sending something like that at me? I came just as you told me to.”

Koutarou stopped and called out to Maxfern. Since he couldn't tell what Maxfern was after, Koutarou proceeded carefully.

“Sorry about that Blue Knight. I couldn't tell if you were the real one or not. I'd like to apologize for the rough welcome.”

“…So you are Maxfern?”

Koutarou didn't know what Maxfern looked like. He had been told by Lidith that Maxfern was a middle aged man with a long beard, but this was the first time they had met.

“Indeed. I am Biorbaram Maxfern. The man who will become king of this world.”

Maxfern introduced himself in a dignified manner. His majestic behavior was indeed fit for the title of king. If he wasn't full of greed, that is.

“The king of the world… that's quite bold. Do you really think you can become king?”

“Of course. That's why I had you come.”

“Me…?”

Koutarou was perplexed.

Does he think he'll become the king of the world by killing me? That's just…

Maxfern had called for Koutarou so he could kill him, using Alaia as a hostage. That's what Koutarou believed. But if you could become king by killing an ordinary high schooler, the world would be overflowing with kings. Koutarou couldn't follow Maxfern's train of thought.

“It couldn't be…”

However, that was when Alaia's expression changed. Koutarou didn't understand, but Alaia understood what Maxfern was after.

“Maxfern, could it be that everything was just for that!?”

“But of course! As expected from the silver princess, known for her wisdom! It seems princess Alaia understands everything! Fuhahahaha!”

Alaia was at a complete loss for words, while Maxfern was laughing out loud. He then reached his right hand out towards Koutarou and declared.

“Alright then, Blue Knight, let's finish up our business! Once that's done I'll give you back her highness!”

Maxfern's voice sounded like he was jeering at Koutarou and Alaia.

“Now, hand over that sword! That holy sword that will make its wielder the king of the world!”

It was as if he was trying to grasp the world with his extended right hand.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

Part 4

Maxfern's goal wasn't to take over the empire of Forthorthe. His goal had always been Signaltin, or more precisely, the holy sword that held the goddess of dawn's power in it, which was said to give its wielder a claim to the throne. The royal family's national treasure, the holy sword said to cut open the future and lead its user to the throne. By obtaining that, Maxfern would aim to become king of the world.

However, the seal used to confine the sword was strong, and not even the combined force of the court magicians could break it.

So at first Maxfern threatened to kill Alaia and Charl to make the emperor break the seal. However, even then the emperor wouldn't do so. Even if his daughters' lives were in danger, he wouldn't assist Maxfern's ambition of using the holy sword to rule the world.

So Maxfern changed his plans. The holy sword's seal would only be broken if the country was in a true crisis. So he assassinated the emperor and empress and started the coup d'état in order to create that crisis. The coup d'état wasn't his goal, but his method.

Next, Maxfern let Alaia, who had no idea of what was happening, escape. Alaia and the others hadn't been able to escape on their own, Maxfern had created an escape route for them.

So when Maxfern's niece, Lidith, let Alaia escape, he felt like hugging and praising her. Lidith's actions were exactly what he had hoped for.

Ever since then, Maxfern had kept watch of Alaia, and at the same time made sure she always felt a moderate sense of danger. He would send pursuers after her, and even poison the village she was hiding in. His goal of doing that was to make Alaia believe that this was a true national crisis.

That's why Caris's mission had only been to monitor Alaia, and why Dextro hadn't been permitted to directly kill Alaia. It was all to make Alaia believe this was a national crisis, so she would break the seal on the holy sword.

However, he had made one miscalculation, and that was the Blue Knight's, Koutarou's, existence.

Ever since Koutarou had appeared, Maxfern's plans had continued to fail. The pursuers were defeated, the poison was treated and the steel giant had been defeated. Their attacks on the base ended up as failures, and stopping the Forthorthe army's advance was not possible. What's more, Koutarou's existence gave Alaia hope, and she began believing that the country could be saved as long as Koutarou was present, even though Maxfern wanted her to believe the holy sword was necessary.

So Maxfern changed his plans once more. He decided that the best way to make Alaia feel a good sense of danger was to target Koutarou's life.

Maxfern received reports from the spies he had planted inside the reborn Forthorthe army that Koutarou and Alaia were either lovers, or something close to that. If Koutarou's life was in danger, Maxfern suspected that Alaia would break the seal on the holy sword for the country's and for Koutarou's sake. Sending Alunaya and the assassins at Koutarou were all to that end.

As a result, the seal on the holy sword was broken, and the sword was now within Maxfern's reach. Though he had hated Koutarou at first, he now almost felt like thanking him.

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Part 5

The moment Maxfern demanded Signaltin from Koutarou, Alaia let out a sorrowful voice similar to a scream.

“You killed father and mother for that!? You started a coup d'état, killed a lot of people, and cornered me, all to break the seal on that sword!?”

To Alaia, that was a situation that made her despair. Everything had been according to Maxfern's schemes. The Forthorthe army's uphill battle, the large amount of people dying and even Alaia's heart. Maxfern had manipulated all of it just to make Alaia break the sword's seal.

“That's right! If I didn't, I would never get my hands on that sword! And I would never be able to become king of the world! I served the royal family for decades, just so I could get a chance! Everything was all for this, princess Alaia!”

This was the highlight of Maxfern's life. He had waited for this chance for several decades. If he could get his hands on Signaltin, everything would go as he planned. He could enjoy eternal life gained from the sword's powers, or he could turn his attention to world conquest. If he obtained the sword, the possibilities were endless. Maxfern no longer had anything to fear. The future was spreading out, infinitely, in front of him.

“…To think you were after this sword…”

This came as a surprise to Koutarou. In Theia's manuscript, Maxfern's goal had only been to take over the country. However, reality had been completely different from the manuscript from the start.

“Now, give that sword to me, Blue Knight. If you do, I'll safely return princess Alaia and the others to you. It shouldn't be a bad deal for you either.”

Maxfern crossed the garden and casually approached Koutarou. Maxfern was convinced that there was no way he wouldn't accept this deal.

“If you'd like, I could leave Forthorthe alone for a couple of hundred years. As long as I have that sword, I have all the time in the world.”

“Kuh…”

Koutarou began hesitating.

Should he hand over the sword and save Alaia and the others? Or should he defeat Maxfern here and save Forthorthe?

Koutarou could only chose one of the two.

“You can't, Koutarou-sama! Even if it's for us, you can't give that sword to Maxfern!”

Alaia wished for the latter, just like the former emperor had. However, then Alaia and the others would be killed.

If he chose the former, peace would return to Forthorthe for a while. However, if the sword had the powers Maxfern said it did, Alaia and Charl's descendants would eventually be trampled by Maxfern.

The end result would be the same, the only difference was how long it would take.

“But, your highness—”

“If you're my knight, then please realize my wish! Please slay Maxfern and at least save yourself!”

“That's right, Blue Knight! You must live! Live and protect Forthorthe!”

“Shut those women up, Grevanas!”

“Yes.”

Grevanas signaled to several of his subordinates nearby. They formed a circle around a big crystal in the center and started chanting something. The next moment, that appeared.

Something huge came crashing towards the ground at an incredibly speed. And just before it smashed into the ground, it flapped its large wings, reduced its speed and landed.

However, even then, the sound made when landing was terrific.

It was the fire dragon emperor, Alunaya.

Its over 20 meters giant body made both the earth and air shake.

“This is the dragon from that time!?”

“S-Sister!”

Although Alaia and Charl had remained courageous up until now, there was nothing they could do with Alunaya's gigantic body in front of them. All that the bound girls could do was hold their breaths with the dragon, who seemed to be brutality given form, in front of them.

“So you've come, monster…”

Koutarou instinctively raised Signaltin. Seeing that, Maxfern stopped Koutarou.

“Careful there, Blue Knight, you better not be thinking of something stupid. If you do anything out of the ordinary, Alunaya will bite down on the princesses with its sharp fangs.”

“Grrrrrrr.”

As if hearing what Maxfern said, Alunaya growled. It then opened its large mouth. If it were to close that mouth, Alaia and the others would be torn apart instantly. Since Koutarou was well of aware of their power, this threat had a big effect on Koutarou.

“Kuh.”

Koutarou stopped and lowered his sword.

“Good, that's right. As long as you obey, the princesses won't have to die.”

Maxfern began walking again. He was now right in front of Koutarou.

“Koutarou-sama…”

Alaia bit her lips. As expected, Koutarou couldn't abandon them. Him having pulled his sword was proof of that. In reality, he should cut down Maxfern where he stood. However, Koutarou couldn't do it. He would probably hand the sword over to Maxfern. There was no longer any way to prevent that.

Maxfern stopped in front of Koutarou and casually presented his right hand. He had a triumphant grin on his face.

“Now, Blue Knight. The sword.”

“…It's your win, Maxfern.”

Koutarou made an unpleasant expression and nodded, before extending his right hand and presenting Signaltin to Maxfern.

“Oooooh, so it's finally in my hands, the holy sword!”

Having received the sword, Maxfern raised it above his head. He looked like a child that had just gotten a new toy.

“We're in position! Go ahead, Bertorion!”

Clan's voice could be heard from his communication device.

“You're late, Clan!”

The moment he heard Clan's voice, Koutarou made a fist and swung at Maxfern. His goal was of course to reclaim Signaltin. The time for a counter attack Koutarou had been waiting for was finally here.

“I can't help it! Since Alunaya appeared we had to change position!”

“I don't want to hear excuses!”

“W-What!?”

Distracted by the sword, Maxfern was unable to dodge Koutarou's punch.

Receiving Koutarou's blow with his cheek, Maxfern turned over and collapsed. Koutarou quickly rushed up to Maxfern and tried to take the sword back.

“I won't let that happen.”

However, before Koutarou reached the sword, Grevanas cast a spell. His magical cane had a special magic built into it. It required neither incantation or motion to activate. It was an artifact that let the user cast a spell just by thinking it. The magical arrow created rained down and kept Koutarou away from Maxfern. Meanwhile, Maxfern got up and out of trouble.

“Damn it, kill Alaia and the others right away!”

Maxfern was really angry after Koutarou's unexpected attack. He ordered the murder of Alaia and the others as revenge. The life of a princess was a price far too high to pay for a single punch. However, Maxfern couldn't forgive Koutarou punching him since he had now become king of the world.

“Do it!”

Grevanas ordered his subordinates to kill Alaia. The ring they had formed around the crystal relayed those orders to Alunaya.

“ROAAAAAAAR.”

The orders were swiftly conveyed to Alunaya and the dragon let out a roar. Its loud voice shook the atmosphere. The dragon opened his mouth wide and attacked Alaia and the others who were still bound.

However, just before the dragon's fangs reached Alaia and the others, a large explosion occurred by Alunaya's feet. The unexpected explosion caused Alunaya to lose its balance and it fell to the side.

The impact rivaled the explosion and Alunaya crushed the stone pavement with its fall.

“Uwah!?”

Thanks to the explosion, Alaia and the others avoided Alunaya's fangs, but it wasn't all positive. Fragments of the stone pavement Alunaya crushed shot towards Koutarou.

“Damn it, that's overdoing it, Clan.”

Koutarou landed on his butt after getting hit by a ten centimeter big rock. It was all thanks to the armor's barrier that it ended with just him falling down. If it wasn't for the barrier, something terrible would have happened to Koutarou.

“What was I supposed to do!? The dragon just suddenly appeared so I couldn't make any fine adjustments!”

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The explosion had come from a bomb Clan had set. Clan could become invisible using an invention she had made herself. And while Koutarou was distracting Maxfern and the others, she had snuck up and planted the bomb.

Using the opportunity give to them by the explosion, Flair and the others used the same device as Clan to save Alaia and the others. That was the rescue plan Koutarou and Clan had come up with.

“Bertorion, we've saved princess Alaia and the others!”

The plan was a success, and Alaia and the others were now free once more. Koutarou could see everyone meet up at the edge of his view.

“Alright!”

All that was left was to reclaim Signaltin and defeat Maxfern. Pumping himself up, Koutarou was about to get back up.

“Koutarou-sama, look out!”

Alaia's screams could be heard through the old castle's garden. The next moment, Maxfern appeared in front of Koutarou with Signaltin raised above his head.

“Things won't go the way you want them, Blue Knight!”

Unlike Koutarou, Maxfern hadn't been showered with stones. Seeing Koutarou fall, he didn't miss his chance.

“Maxfern!”

Koutarou was still getting up, he was seemingly defenseless.

At this rate I'll be killed!

Realizing the danger, Koutarou quickly ordered the armor.

“Raise the barrier! Full power!”

“As you wish, my lord. Commencing emergency deployment of the distortion field.”

The armor obeyed Koutarou's order and deployed the barrier. Linked up white hexagonal tiles appeared in between Koutarou and Maxfern and stood in the way of the incoming attack.

The next moment the hexagons caught Maxfern's attack. However, Koutarou fell over once more from the force. At the same time, the armor's systems let out a cry.

“Alert message. Distortion field function has been stopped. The damage is above tolerance levels.”

“From one hit!?”

The hexagon tiles disappeared all at once. With just a single strike, Maxfern had knocked out the armor's barrier. Even the armor that had stood up against all kinds of attacks up until now was powerless in front of Signaltin.

“Looks like the match is over, Blue Knight.”

Maxfern raised the sword above his head once more. Koutarou had fallen over and his barrier was gone. In the current state, if Maxfern swung down Signaltin, Koutarou would easily be cut in half.

“No, not yet!”

Koutarou focused on his left hand. He used his spiritual power to create a large fireball and threw it Maxfern.

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“Something like has no chance against this sword!”

Maxfern swung Signaltin down without even flinching. The sword easily cut through the fireball and continued towards Koutarou.

“So that didn't work either!?”

Koutarou had used all the spiritual energy he could muster to create that fireball. However, Signaltin erased all of Koutarou's efforts with ease. Neither his defensive or offensive powers worked against Maxfern. He no longer had any ways of defeating Maxfern.

I'm sorry your highness… even though I promised that I would protect you, it seems this is as far as I go…

Death was inescapable as the blade came flying. Koutarou was prepared to die.

“However!”

However, even then, Koutarou faced Maxfern. Even if he was cut and killed, he wanted to injure Maxfern as much as possible and buy as much time as possible to allow Alaia and Charl to escape.

Even if he couldn't avoid death, he wanted to fulfill his oath to the very last moment. That was most likely the moment Koutarou became the true Blue Knight.

“Noooooooooooooo!”

Alaia screamed at the top of her lungs.

To Alaia, the sight in front of her almost looked like slow motion. Koutarou had realized he was going to die, but still faced Maxfern while Signaltin approached him. However, that sight was intermittently replaced with memories of when she had met Koutarou and the time they had spent together.

Koutarou would die. What's worse, he would die by Signaltin, which she had unsealed to protect him. It was almost as if Alaia had killed Koutarou herself. Alaia's heart couldn't accept that reality.

There was no way she could accept that.

Alaia's life had become part of Signaltin and would always protect Koutarou. It would always be besides him. That was her own oath, and her only wish as she could not live freely.

“Koutarou-samaaaaaaa!”

However, no matter how much Alaia screamed, that time had come. Signaltin approached Koutarou and came in contact with his hair. As that time approached, Alaia was full of despair.

“Wahahahahaha, die, dieee, Blue Knight! Accept the punishment of defying the king of the world!”

Maxfern was swinging down the sword with all of his power. Everyone believed that Koutarou was cut in half.

However.

Signaltin was what was split in two.

The moment Signaltin touched Koutarou's body, it broke in half, making a shrill noise, leaving Koutarou completely uninjured. It was like a paper-mache sword made from paper and glue.

Nobody could believe the sight of what had just happened. And of course, the most surprised of all was Maxfern.

“As if something like this could happen! Just before, just a moment ago it had that much power!”

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Maxfern was in complete shock and stared at Signaltin that had split in half. It had lost its shine and turned into some rusty iron scrap. Even though it had been shining with such a beautiful silver sheen just a few seconds ago.

“Wasn't I supposed to become king of the world!? Wasn't it supposed have the power of the goddess of dawn in it!? It was even supposed to be able to destroy the evil rooted in people! What is going on, Grevanas!? This is just some scrap!”

Trembling with rage, Maxfern threw the remains of Signaltin to the ground. When it landed, the rusted blade fully shattered, leaving the handle behind as the only thing recognizable. However, even the handle was cracked, and looked like it might fall apart any second now.

“I-I don't understand either! For it to suddenly lose its power…”

“Now everything has been for nothing, Grevanas!”

Maxfern yelled at Grevanas, with his face dyed red with rage. Even the calm Grevanas seemed to have lost sight of himself at this sudden event.

“…Signal…tin…”

Only Koutarou remained calm in the sight this surprising event. He picked up the handle thrown to the ground and looked towards Alaia.

“…”

Unlike everyone else, Alaia had her eyes closed and her head turned down. At this point, Alaia ignored even what she heard. She didn't want to see the moment Koutarou was cut down. She didn't want to hear his last screams. Because she was so intent on that, she was unaware that Koutarou was safe.

“…So that really is this case… this sword, Signaltin… that's what it is…”

The sword crest on Alaia's forehead was shining brightly. It was almost as if that crest was the real Signaltin.

“Princess Alaia.”

Having understood everything, Koutarou called out to Alaia. While both enemy and ally were at a loss and the situation had been brought to a standstill, it didn't change the fact that they were still in the middle of enemy territory. In order to escape from this crisis, her help was essential.

“Eh…?”

Upon hearing Koutarou's voice, Alaia opened her eyes. At first, she believed that voice might have been an illusion. However, when she opened her eyes to look, she could see Koutarou standing there.

“Koutarou-sama?”

“I am sorry for making you worry, your highness.”

“Koutarou-sama, w-weren't you, killed, just now…?”

Koutarou who was supposed to have been cut down was still alive. That mysterious and unexpected sight made Alaia blink repeatedly. She was happy, but she was so confused she couldn't understand the situation. She didn't know what kind of face she should make.

“It seems like Signaltin was the one to break.”

“The sword… ah…”

Alaia looked at Koutarou's hand. There she saw Signaltin's handle being held by Koutarou. The moment she saw the ruined sword, she was reminded of what the sword had looked like when it was first revealed at the temple.

I see… if I am part of that sword, that sword is also part of me. Then, my oath is—

Alaia's eyes lit up as she understood what it all meant.

“Let's go your highness. I will use my life and this sword to protect you.”

“I believe in you, Koutarou-sama. And I will protect your life.”

The two nodded at each other before taking a pose. Koutarou pointed the non-existent blade towards Maxfern. And Alaia reached her arms forwards and pointed her palms towards Koutarou.

Noticing the two, Maxfern sneered.

“What are you going do with that scrap? Did you lose your minds after that holy sword broke?”

If Maxfern had ordered Grevanas and his court magicians to attack now, this outcome might have been different. However, because of his shock, Maxfern overlooked Koutarou and Alaia's actions. He was convinced that they couldn't do anything anyways.

“You weren't able to cut me because this seemed to be broken.”

“What!?”

Koutarou smiled as he saw Maxfern taken aback by surprise, and he began charging towards him. The sight of him running with the handle made it look like he really was holding a powerful sword. As he did, Alaia began incanting.

“Past, present and future, oh mother of all things, goddess of dawn.”

It was the incantation Alaia had spoken in the temple.

As she got further into the incantation, she sword crest on her forehead began glowing, brighter and brighter. The light covered her whole body and eventually it overflowed from her body.

“A descendant of Forthorthe, your faithful servant asks of thee. Now is the time to break the seal, and give us power to overcome this crisis.”

The light headed towards the shattered fragments of the blade lying on the ground. Once light covered all of the fragments, they began floating up into the air, and were drawn to the handle Koutarou was holding.

“Wind of the heavens. Green of the ground. Water of the sea. Fire of the mountain. Using my life as provision, reveal the power to unify all things!”

The fragments that flew to the handle began reconstructing the blade from the handle and up. And by the time Koutarou had reached Maxfern, the sword had regained its former shape.

“My name is Alaia! The silvery white snow of Mastir! Oh holy sword of the temple, carve my name into your blade and revive!”

Koutarou raised the sword above his head. At the same time, the sword regained its silvery sheen and began emitting its pure-white magic. The sword that had been a broken, the rusted piece of scrap just a few seconds ago, was given its name once more and regained its former powers.

The holy sword, Signaltin.

Now that Koutarou and Alaia's feeling were as one, more power than ever before filled the sword.

“That's impossible! A broken blade regenerating is impossible! Regaining its lost power is impossible!”

“Since you're not a knight, you would never understand why this sword shines, even if it was something so simple!”

What was important wasn't the sword. It wasn’t a problem if it broke or not; what was important was what was placed into it. In fact, not even the power inside might have been a problem.

Koutarou could feel the warmth emitting from the sword. This sword would protect him, and all living creatures of this world.

“I won't accept this! Just because I wasn't born a knight!”

However, Maxfern didn't notice. He was too focused on his lineage, and that the sword had broke and lost its power, that he didn't realize what was truly important. If he had noticed that, the sword might have answered to him.

“With this it's over, Maxfern!”

“Damn it! God damn it!”

“Maxfern-sama!”

Koutarou brandished the sword and was about to attack Maxfern. However, in that moment, he could sense the intention to attack covering the entire area he was standing in. Sensing that, he instinctively jumped back. The next moment, giant claws slashed through the place he had been.

“Alunaya!”

It was a strike from the fire dragon emperor, Alunaya. It had fallen to the ground from Clan's explosion, but it had now recovered was attacking Koutarou.

“Kill them, Grevanas! Don't let any one of them escape alive!”

Boiling with rage and his eyes bloodshot, Maxfern ordered the deaths of Koutarou and everyone.

“Please stop it already, uncle! What more will come from fighting!?”

“Shut up, shut up! I'll kill you too!”

“Uncle…”

Not even Maxfern's niece’s, Lidith's, words could reach him now. That's just how intense the rage that made his entire body tremble was.

Maxfern couldn't forgive the holy sword for not accepting him, the man who was supposed to become the king of the world. Nor could he forgive Koutarou who was using that sword. Allowing those existences was the same as admitting that his own existence was insignificant. That all of his efforts up until now had been in vain. That was something the prideful Maxfern could never do.

“Get them men!”

In contrast to the enraged Maxfern, Grevanas calmly ordered his subordinates to attack.

As he did, a flock of demons sprang up from cover. Their numbers easily passed 100. The demons appearances varied greatly, but their eyes were all filled with the intent to kill. And that wasn't all. Several of the steel giant Koutarou had fought before could be seen amongst the demons.

This was Maxfern's current troops. No, these were no longer troops, but a horde of monsters. In his pursuit of power, Maxfern had resorted to using non-human creatures. They were most likely reflecting the inside of him. Maxfern was now but a monster with the appearance of a man.

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And the horde of monsters attacked Alaia and the other seven girls.

“Your highness! Everyone!”

Koutarou quickly moved to rescue the girls.

“Oh no you don't. Your opponent is right here!”

“ROAAAAAAAAAAAR!”

However, Alunaya stood in Koutarou's way. After a roar, Alunaya revealed its fangs and threatened Koutarou. As a result, he was no longer able to head to the girls’ rescue.

“Kuh!”

“Kukuku, Blue Knight, even if you're invincible, those girls are normal humans. Can they last long enough for you to make it to them? Wahahahahah!”

Maxfern laughed at Koutarou.

With Signaltin, Koutarou was strong. He might even beat a giant dragon. However, regardless of if he won or lost, it would take time for their match to end. In that time, Maxfern was going to kill all of the girls.

“…You're too naive, Maxfern.”

However, Koutarou smiled. Despite Maxfern laughing at him, he showed no signs of anxiety.

“What!?”

“Sorry, but things won't go as you planned.”

Koutarou knew that those girls weren't some weaklings that would go down without a fight.

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Part 6

As the demons attacked, the girls obeyed Flair's instructions and calmly created a formation.

In the front was Clan and Flair. Skilled in fighting, these two would create a shield wall. Clan was using her rifle like always. However, Flair's weapon was different from normal.

“You understand how to use that weapon, right?”

“I'm fine! The balance is slightly different, but since I always used a thin sword there's not much of a difference!”

Flair was holding a sword made out of light. A shining blade, reminiscent to a neon tube, extended from the metal handle. This was a beam saber with a scorching hot blade created by containing heavy metal particles within an electromagnetic field, creating the shape of a sword. Flair had gotten two of these from Clan and held one in each hand, and she attacked the oncoming demons.

“Something like this?”

Flair blocked the demon's attack with one sword and attacked with the other. The high temperature from the beam easily cut through the demons and scorched their bodies. Combined with Flair's own skills, she was like a tiny, glowing tornado cutting through demons.

“That's very good! Please continue like that!”

Clan was shooting at the demons that Flair couldn't reach with her sword. By doing that, Flair could take bolder actions. And if Flair was about to get attacked, she would get in the way to cover Flair. The barrier protecting her body was strong and could easily brush off the demons’ claws.

Behind the shield wall and in charge of attacking was the alchemist Lidith and the magician Caris.

“Caris, it's time for the next attack!”

“Alright, I'm ready!”

Lidith and Caris were working together. Their two jobs were to wipe out a large number of demons using large-scale attacks and to defeat the steel giants.

Lidith had borrowed the strategical computer and observation device from Clan and targeted a large amount of enemies. Since Caris and Lidith had been linked through magic, the target information was conveyed to Caris as well. Using the information she got from Lidith, Caris repeatedly sniped enemies she couldn't see herself. Since Lidith prioritized targets that were entering Caris's range, the demons were shot down before being able to do anything.

This was a strategy only made possible thanks to Lidith. Normally, there wouldn't be anyone capable of using the strategical computer in this age. However, having served as Clan's assistant, Lidith had learned how. Thanks to that, they were able to create a combination attack using science and magic.

“Caris, the giant!”

“I know! I'm, currently planting it! … Alright, detonate it!”

“Detonating!”

A steel giant collapsed alongside an explosive sound. There wasn't that big of a wound on the giant. The damage was limited to a small dent and scorch marks around its chest. However, that alone was enough to the defeat the giant. This too was a combination attack from Lidith and Caris.

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After their first fight with a steel giant, Clan had prepared a certain type of explosive. It was the kind of explosive that was applied to the target before use, but it didn't cause that big of an explosion. However, the explosive power turned into a shockwave and destroyed a certain something inside the target. Knowing the steel giant's construction, Clan targeted the crystal powering them. Though the giant's armor was made from thick steel, the inside was just a crystal. Destroying the crystal was easy using this method.

Caris would use her magic to attach the explosive to the giant and Lidith would use the computer to detonate it. Even the mighty giants were powerless against this attack. Even though their first battle had given them such a hard time, they were now defeating the steel giants with ease.

Behind Caris and Lidith were Fauna the priestess and Alaia. Fauna was in charge of using spiritual power to heal and increase everyone's physical strength. With this, the four up front could fight without reservation. Alaia was in charge of command and support using magic.

“I'm gradually starting to understand how to use magic, Fauna.”

“You're doing great. This is very good for someone using magic for the first time, Alaia-sama!”

Alaia didn't have the knowledge to use magic, but she was currently receiving magic power from Signaltin via the crest on her forehead. She then controlled it using the language used for rituals that she learned during her seminars to cast magic. As a beginner, she couldn't help with attacking, but she could help with strengthening and defending. In parallel to her commands, she used her newfound power to support everyone.

And in the rear were Charl and Mary.

“Please stand still, princess Charl.”

“I know, I know.”

The young Charl didn't have much of a job, if anything it was to stand still. If she wandered around, she would get in the way of the others and cause everyone to worry. Being wise for her age, Charl understood that and remained motionless in the rear.

“…Uhm, your highness, I feel like I'm not being of much use.”

“Don't grief, Mary. I'm completely in the way.”

The maid Mary's role was to guard Charl. Though she had learned martial arts for self-defense, she wasn't skilled enough to take part in actual combat. As a result, she was positioned in the rear to guard Charl. However, this job was surprisingly important. Charl's safety had an impact on everyone's morale. The job Mary was complaining about was the most important of all.

Just like Koutarou had expected, the eight girls weren't killed instantly. In fact, they had taken a counter offensive and were reducing the number of enemies. Though they had gotten weapons and equipment from Clan, they were firmly holding the line against a horde of monsters.

“Grevanas, just what are they doing! They are just a few girls!”

“But Maxfern-sama, their weapons are—”

“Shut up! I don't want to hear any excuses!”

The current situation was making Maxfern angry. Nothing was going the way he wanted it. He had gotten his hands on the sword, only to lose it. He tried to kill his enemies, but it wasn't going well. Everyone had been proceeding smoothly until they reached this castle, but the moment they came here their luck had run out. It was a nightmarish situation for Maxfern.

“It looks like your plan is falling apart, Maxfern. I guess you're just a third-rate villain.”

Koutarou readied his sword and kept Alunaya in check while provoking Maxfern. His aim was to get Maxfern to focus on him to reduce the pressure on everyone else. In reality, he was terrified of Alunaya turning its flames towards the girls.

“Shut up! In that case, I'll at least kill you! Do it, Grevanas! Kill the Blue Knight!”

Like Koutarou had planned, Maxfern focused on him. He might not even have needed to provoke Maxfern in the first place. Maxfern absolutely hated Koutarou for being able to use the sword he couldn't.

“As you wish.”

Grevanas ordered his subordinates to shift portion of the forces attacking the girls onto Koutarou instead. And he himself used his cane to control Alunaya and continue its attacks on Koutarou.

“It went as planned… but at this rate I'll be killed. I should change the battlefield.”

Realizing that he would be at a disadvantage, Koutarou dodged Alunaya's flames, activated his boosters and soared up into the sky. He had determined that it would be too dangerous to fight on the ground with a large amount of magicians and demons targeting him.

“ROAAAAAAAAAAAAR.”

Alunaya chased after Koutarou whilst roaring.

Flapping its large wings, Alunaya's giant body flew through the air. Those wings and the magic covering its body created an immense amount of lift, allowing Alunaya to fly like a bird. About ten or so demons followed after Alunaya.

Alunaya was being controlled by Grevanas while his subordinates controlled the demons. In other words, the court magicians were using their full force to crush Koutarou. While that was Koutarou's plan all along, it was the biggest danger he had been in so far.

“If I'm forced onto the defensive, I'll end up losing! In that case—!”

The armor's barrier still hadn't recovered, so taking on continuous attacks in this state was very dangerous. Koutarou quickly made up his mind and attacked with Signaltin. His target was of course Alunaya. He had to beat down the dragon and secure an escape path.

“Everyone! Please lend me your powers!”

Those words naturally slipped out from Koutarou's mouth. All of Koutarou's powers were just borrowed. In the past he had grieved about that fact. However, now Koutarou felt that was for the best. He had noticed that if he turned into someone like Maxfern, it didn't matter how much power he had.

It didn't matter if he didn't have any power of his own as long as he could achieve his goal while working together with someone. And he noticed that working together with someone was the most important thing. The only reason Koutarou was even here was because of all the cooperation that had been accumulated.

“…I want you say those words to me first.”

“Princess Alaia!?”

With the battle about the start, Alaia's voice reached Koutarou's ears. It wasn't a voice created by sound. It was conveyed to him through the glow of Signaltin.

Koutarou instinctively looked towards the garden. There he saw Alaia with her hands in front of chest, praying, and looking up at him. Just a few moments ago, that would have been an incredibly dangerous act. However, with the reduced number of enemies, the chances of her being attacked dropped.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

“Koutarou-sama, I will fight with you.”

“What do you—”

Before Koutarou could question Alaia, a demon appeared in front of him. Koutarou left the question as it was and swung Signaltin at the demon.

In that moment, a powerful glow emitted from Signaltin's blade. At this timing, it was almost as if it had sensed Koutarou's intention to attack. The demon was cut in half by the light that shot out from the sword before the blade even reached it. The next moment, Signaltin had passed through. There was no feedback at all, it was like he had cut an illusion. However, the demon turned into dust and disappeared.

“Koutarou-sama, fight any way you want. I'll time it from here.”

“I see, so that's what you meant! I'm counting on you, princess Alaia!”

“Yes!”

This phenomenon was caused by Alaia. Using the crest on her forehead, she controlled the output of Signaltin. Normally, Signaltin constantly emitted a certain amount of magical power. But by controlling Signaltin, she could control when to release the energy. By doing that, the amount of energy used wouldn't change, as the magic power was released in bursts. It wasn't as much a power up as it was efficient use of the magic power.

“Here I go, princess Alaia!”

“I'll protect your back! Just focus on what's in front of you, Koutarou-sama!”

“I understand!”

Koutarou charged towards a nearby demon. Since Alaia momentarily accelerated him, the distance between them was covered almost immediately. To the demon, it must have looked like Koutarou teleported. So even if the demon wanted to dodge, it didn't have the time. Signaltin began emitting light once more and the demon had been cut before it could even move.

“Hyaaaaaaah!”

“Kah Kah!”

Two demons attacked Koutarou at once. One demon had an insect's head and another a goose's. They aimed for Koutarou's back with their sharp claws, planning on tearing him apart.

However, the demons were hit by a small shockwave before their claws could reach Koutarou. It only had enough power to slightly damage them, but it was enough to make them stop. With their wings spread out, they were easily affected by the shockwave. And while they had been stopped in their tracks, Signaltin attacked.

Signaltin cut the two in half without any sound, and their bodies were separated into magic power and dust. It was a splendid combination attack by Koutarou and Alaia.

“I can do it! With this, I can do it!”

Thanks to Alaia's accurate control of Signaltin, the sword was completely different from before. Its offensive power had risen dramatically, and the leftover magic power was used for acceleration, defense and various other things. As a result, Koutarou was overpowering the demons all on his own. It only took a few seconds before the ten something demons were reduced to a number that could be counted with the fingers on one hand.

“ROAAAAAAAAAAR!”

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

With the majority of the demons gone, Alunaya charged towards Koutarou. Meanwhile, the remaining demons retreated. Maxfern and the others had determined that the demons didn't stand a chance against Koutarou.

“…Time for the main show.”

Koutarou wasn't going to use the same casual pose he had taken when dealing with the demons; instead he grabbed the sword with both hands and brandished Signaltin.

“Koutarou-sama, I'll keep an eye on your surroundings. You deal with Alunaya.”

“Please do, your highness.”

While Koutarou was fighting with Alunaya, there was a chance that the demons might attack. So with Alaia watching his back, Koutarou could focus on Alunaya.

“We're almost there! You can do it, Koutarou-sama!”

“As you wish, my princess!”

As he shouted, Koutarou readied his sword and flew forward at full speed. Alunaya's intention to attack was expanding rapidly. It was either an attack with its tail or a flame breath. If he sat still he would be a sitting duck, and if he closed in, it would be harder for Alunaya to pull off such a large attack.

Alunaya unleashed its giant tail. The tail coming from the side was like a massive whip that made the very air around it tremble.

“I can't take that!”

Koutarou made an overly large evasive maneuver to dodge the tail. Without the barrier, a single hit would be fatal. And without Caris's illusions, he had to prioritize safety over all else.

“Please leave it to me.”

However, Alaia increased Koutarou's speed to make up for what he lost in the maneuver and Koutarou charged towards Alunaya with the same speed he had started with.

“Goooooooooo!”

Alunaya had a powerful barrier protecting it. While Signaltin had the ability to dispel magic, would it be enough to break through the barrier? The only way to find out was to try.

“ROAAAAAAAAAAAR!”

Signaltin splendidly broke through Alunaya's barrier. One of Alunaya's scales was torn off by the attack and it screamed out in pain.

“It worked!? But it was too shallow!”

Since Alunaya wasn't a creature summoned through magic, its body wasn't composed of magic. Because of that, Alunaya wasn't reduced to dust like the demons. The only damage was the scale that had been torn off its body.

“So I can hurt it if I want, but this sword won't do that much damage, huh…”

Koutarou dodged Alunaya's claws while racking his brain.

Alunaya was over 20 meters long. This sword was much too small to cause damage to something so large. The results would be the same if he used the weapons built into the armor. It was like challenging a tank with a rifle.

“Do I have to rely on this just like last time?”

Kiriha's gauntlet, with Signaltin's ability to break through the barrier, should be more effective this time around. And by combining his attack with the armor's armament he should be able to do a little more damage.

"If only it had a weak point…"

"A weak point? Oh yeah, I think…"

Thanks to Alaia, Koutarou was reminded of the crystal on the back of Alunaya's neck, and that he had been able to make Alunaya retreat after attacking it.

"There's a point like that. A magical crystal is buried in the back of Alunaya's neck."

"I see… then that would be the perfect target for this sword. By dispelling the magic, we might be able to turn the tables of this battle."

"I'll give it a shot!"

Koutarou readied Signaltin and activated his boosters. The propellant was quickly running out. Just like before, they would be better off trying things that might work as quickly as possible.

Koutarou tried to use his mobility to get behind Alunaya, however unlike last time, he was now all alone. Without an opening from Alunaya, it wasn't very easy to circle around. And without support from Caris, he was just wasting time.

"What should I… I don't have the time to wait for Clan's reinforcement…"

Clan and the others were currently dealing with the demons on the ground. Although the number of demons had been greatly decreased, all the girls could do was send Alaia his way. Any further reinforcement couldn't be expected, and there wasn't enough time to wait for Clan and the others to finish up.

"Look out, Koutarou-sama!"

"Haaah!"

Immediately after Alaia's warning, Alunaya's flame breath passed through right next to Koutarou. He had been so close that some of his hair got burnt.

"Please be careful, Koutarou-sama! It's all over if you take that!"

"Sorry, I was lost in thought… wait a minute?"

Making sure the flame breath had missed him, Koutarou came up with a wild idea. He quickly confirmed it with Alaia.

"Your highness, can I cut through that breath?"

Alaia instinctively held her breath after hearing Koutarou's idea.

"…It might be possible, but if it fails, there's no going back."

Alunaya's flame breath was a normal breath that had been altered using magic. In other words, Signaltin might be able to dispel it.

And when Alunaya was spewing its flames, it showed an opening. It had to stop to spew its flames and part of its view was covered because of the fire. By purposely taking the flame breath head on and using Signaltin to dispel it, Alunaya would lose sight of Koutarou.

However, if he failed, if he missed his timing or hit it at a bad angle, Koutarou would be swallowed by the flames. Considering that risk, Alaia couldn't agree with Koutarou's idea.

Hearing Alaia's answer, Koutarou smiled and called her name.

"Princess Alaia."

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

“What is it?”

“What do you believe in? The fire breath? Or me?”

“…Kou…”

Alaia was at a loss for words.

“K-K-Koutarou-sama! That's changing the topic! That's unfair!”

Alaia raised her voice and criticized Koutarou. To Alaia, that question only had one answer.

“Stupid Koutarou-sama!”

Alaia didn't answer the question. Instead she continued to criticize him like a child.

“That's poor manners, your highness… Clan, do you have any advice?”

Koutarou smiled and asked Clan using his communication device. He also wanted to her the scientist's opinion.

“…I don't, stupid. If there was anything to say, it would be that the flame breath is practically made out of plasma, so using an electromagnetic field, you might be able to protect yourself a little, stupid.”

In reality, Clan's advice would have been to stop. However, knowing Koutarou's personality, she knew that he had already decided on doing it by the time he asked her. So she gave up and gave him the advice regarding the electromagnetic field. However, this advice wasn't certain, and if it had been anyone other than Koutarou, she would have told them to stop.

When plasma is applied to an electromagnetic field, a complex motion occurs. With that, the plasma coming from the breath would diffuse and the field would serve as a sort of shield. It worked the same as how Earth's magnetic field protected against solar winds. However, if the momentum was too great there wouldn't be that much of an effect. That was most likely the case against Alunaya's breath, but it was better than nothing.

“Alright, I'll give it a try.”

Koutarou grinned and pointed Signaltin towards Alunaya's face.

“Koutarou-sama, please reconsider.”

“Your highness, I still haven't heard your answer.”

“Uh.”

Alaia was hesitant to answer. And after staying quiet for several seconds, she quietly muttered.

“…Make sure you come back, Forthorthe's Blue Knight.”

“As you wish, my princess.”

However, in the end, Alaia didn't answer the actual question.

When there was a distance between the two, Alunaya would often use its flame breath. That's because it knew that Koutarou was strong when he was up close. Because of that, it wasn't that hard to bait out a breath attack.

Alunaya opened its large mouth and began inhaling. Confirming that, Koutarou placed himself not too close, but not too far away either. This balance was actually quite tricky. If he was too close, Alunaya would switch to another attack, but if he was too far, he wouldn't be able to use the flame breath to cover his approach. Koutarou had to find the perfect spot that was just the right distance.

“Now, Koutarou-sama!”

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After confirming that Alunaya was using its magic power, just before it spewed out its flames, Koutarou set his boosters to maximum thrust and charged at the dragon. As long as he could cross this distance, the rest should be easy, so Koutarou was fine with using up the remaining propellant here.

The next moment, Alunaya exhaled its breath. It was an extremely hot, white flame breath. Flames hotter than even the surface of the sun attacked Koutarou.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

“How about thiiiiiiissss!”

While using his boosters to adjust the angle of approach, Koutarou thrust Signaltin forward, like it was an umbrella. At the same time, he generated an electromagnetic field and prepared for the plasma that Signaltin couldn't dispel.

Koutarou was wrapped in a pure-white light. Signaltin's magic power covered Koutarou's entire body while his surroundings were bathed in flames. However, while the sword might have been able to dispel the plasma, it wasn't able to do the same for the air that had been heated. The surrounding temperature shot up and Koutarou felt like he had been thrown into an oven.

“Kuh.”

Fortunately, his armor could withstand this temperature, both thanks to the short time he spent there and the fact that the armor was intended for use in space. The system reported on several errors while the armor was gradually being discolored by the high temperature, but there had been no major influence on the armor's functions.

Koutarou dove out from under the flames and circled around to Alunaya's back. Since Alunaya couldn't see Koutarou because of its breath, it hadn't noticed his movements. As a result, Alunaya was showing Koutarou its completely defenseless back.

“Taaaaakeeeee thiiiiiis!”

And without slowing down his boosters, he charged straight at the back of Alunaya's head. His target was the blue crystal on the attached to the dragon's neck.

Signaltin pierced through Alunaya's barrier and struck its target. As the magic inside the crystal was dispelled, it shattered and scattered all over.

“ROAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAR!”

In that moment, Alunaya screamed in pain. Its voice was so loud it was as if the entire world shook.

“Did I do it!?”

“Koutarou-sama!”

As Koutarou looked on, Alunaya was drawn in by gravity and fell towards the ground. The moment the crystal shattered, Alunaya lost control of its body. As it fell, it repeatedly tried flapping its wings to regain control, but in the end, the dragon crashed into the ground.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

Part 7

Maxfern had an expression of blank surprise as he stared at Alunaya that had dropped into the garden. However, after a short while, he began laughing very silently. It was a demonic laughter that one could probably hear in the depths of hell. It was a desolate voice that made anyone who heard it shudder.

“Ku, kuku, kukukuku, splendid… truly splendid… even though you held the holy sword, to think you'd be able to defeat Alunaya…”

As his laughter spread throughout the garden, the demons surrounding Alaia and the others gathered and encircled Maxfern to protect him. Around him were his loyal subordinates, the alchemists, and Grevanas and his court magicians. They would follow him until the end.

“Just give up already, Maxfern.”

After landing, Koutarou approached to within a few dozen meters of Maxfern. However, the party surrounding Maxfern showed no signs of attacking. Either they feared Koutarou, or hadn't been ordered to do so. Either way, they didn't get in the way of Koutarou and Maxfern's conversation. The eight girls that had escaped from their danger watched the situation develop from behind Koutarou.

“You lost.”

“…That's true. I'll admit to that. It's your victory, Blue Knight.”

Surprisingly, Maxfern seemingly accepted his defeat.

He had not obtained the sword he was after, and his ace in the hole, Alunaya, had been defeated. All his plans had failed, and now all he had left were a couple of dozen subordinates, and a horde of monsters. Even the country of Forthorthe had slipped through his fingers. Maxfern no longer had any means of reversing this situation.

“However! I have no intention of admitting that you own this country, or this world, Blue Knight! This world is mine! I won't hand it over to anyone!”

Before anyone knew it, the demons were holding bottles with black liquid inside of them. However, they weren't planning on doing anything to Koutarou and the others, instead they were about to fly into the sky.

“Do it, Grevanas!”

“Maxfern-sama, do we really have to go this far?”

“Shut it! Can you accept everything up to now being for naught!?”

“I-I didn't say that, but…”

Grevanas, who had up until then had calmly obeyed Maxfern's orders, was now showing hesitance. Seeing that, Koutarou felt something was wrong.

“Then just do as you're told!”

“I understand…”

“What are you planning, Maxfern!?”

Koutarou questioned Maxfern in a serious tone. The ominous feeling was rapidly growing stronger and stronger. He couldn't tell what, but he felt like something bad was about to happen. He couldn't just stay put.

“Like I told you, Blue Knight! I have no intention of giving you this country, or this world!”

“So that's how it is Maxfern!”

In that moment, Alaia raised her head. Her face expressed astonishment and fear. She knew just what Maxfern was planning, just what he was going to have the demons do.

“That black liquid, it's that poison from before, isn't' it!?”

“That's right! Well spotted, as expected from princess Alaia!”

The bottles the demons were carrying contained the same fatal virus that Dextro had used on a village. It was a hellish virus the alchemists had gathered, studied and produced. Maxfern was planning on making the demons carry the virus into the sky and pollute the entirety of Forthorthe.

“Are you planning on destroying Forthorthe!?”

As he understood Maxfern's goal, a chill ran down Koutarou's spine.

The pollution might not end at just Forthorthe, it was possible it could spread through the entire continent or even the entire world.

“Hahaha, isn't that how a country is originally captured!?”

Maxfern laughed and ridiculed Koutarou. Insanity could be seen in his eyes. Before long, his smile vanished, his eyes turned bloodshot and his entire expression showed his insanity.

“This country and this world are mine! That sword might be yours, but I will never give you this world! I'd rather give it to those who live in the darkness before giving it to you!”

Maxfern was filled with such hatred and envy towards the holy sword that hadn't chosen him, and towards Koutarou that had easily been chosen by the sword.

If the holy sword chose Koutarou as king of the world, then he would ruin this would, and make the very fact that Koutarou had been chosen meaningless. All for the sake of rejecting the sword’s choice.

“Kukuku, Hahahahaha! Nobody can stop it now! The world will end! And you Blue Knight, you will reign on a throne of corpses!”

“Maxfern, you bastard!”

As Maxfern's mad laughter filled the garden, the demons took to the sky, carrying bottles filled with virus. In total there were over 50 of the demons, and Koutarou had no way of defeating all of them while at the same time keeping the bottles safe.

“Clan, can't you do something!?”

“I can't come up with something right on the spot! If just one of those bottles shatters, something terrible will happen, there's no way to keep them all safe…”

Such a method didn't exist. If just one of those bottles were to shatter, the virus would pollute this entire area, and shortly thereafter, it would probably spread to Fornorn. The capital would be filled with the dead, and with Fornorn at the core, the pollution would spread further and further.

“Uncle! Please stop it!”

“Shut it, Lidith! I don't want to hear you calling me uncle after you chose the Blue Knight!”

“Maxfern! There's no meaning in this!”

“As expected of princess Alaia, you're correct! The goal is to remove meaning!”

There was no other way but to make Maxfern call the demons back. However, having lost his sanity, he would never obey. His only wish now was to take revenge on the goddess who had erred in her judgement.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

“It's no use, Bertorion! Forthorthe will be ruined!”

Clan could create a cure for this virus. However, the country would be ruined before she could administer to everyone. There was far too little time. It was completely different from saving a single village.

“Blue Knight! Please do something! You must have something you can do, right!? Please say there is!”

“Princess Charl…”

Koutarou grinded his teeth.

Damn it, is watching this all happen all I can do!?

In reality, Koutarou wanted to tell Charl that he could do something about it, but he couldn't. As he had no idea of what he could do.

“Caris-chan, can't you use your magic to do something?”

“It's impossible. They're so spread out that there's nothing I can do.”

“Flair-sama, what should we do?”

“I'm sorry, Mary. I don't know.”

The demons flew off one after the other in front of Koutarou and the others. It was quite literally the sight of the world ending.

This is the first time I see something so frightening… no, wait, is it really?

At this time, a small doubt entered Koutarou's mind. He felt like he had seen this sight before.

When was it? When did I see this? What memory was it?

Koutarou desperately searched through his memories. That memory might become the key to solving this problem. Right now, he wanted to try anything he could.

“Ah…”

Before long, Koutarou recalled the memory he was after. It was back when he had fought against Clan. When she had been about to unleash her final attack, he had heard a voice from somewhere. And the owner of that voice had shown him abnormal-looking monsters, taking to the skies carrying black bottles. And—

“Clan!”

Koutarou's eyes lit up and he rushed towards Clan. He grabbed her shoulders and shook her back and forth. Having found a solution, he had lost sight of himself in excitement.

“W-What is it!?”

Having suddenly been shaken, Clan's eyes rolled in bewilderment.

“We'll use that! You know, that!”

“Please slow down, what are you talking about!?”

“I clearly mean that bomb that sent us here in the first place! Use that to blow those demons, along with the bottles, away!”

That bomb, the super-space-time repulsion shell, was the ultimate weapon Clan had developed. When activated it threw everything caught in its radius outside of the universe. Koutarou wanted Clan to use that to throw both the demons and the bottles out of this world.

“R-Right, if it's that, then! But that's still being adjusted, we don't know where—”

“You idiot! Now's not the time for that! Hurry up and do it before it's too late!”

“I understand, I got it! Cradle! Prepare to launch the super-space-time repulsion shell.

“As you wish, my princess.”

Right beside the now desperately shouting Clan, a black hole much larger than what she normally used to call out weapons appeared. A rounded cone appeared from the black hole. It was the missile's warhead. Clan had created two of those missiles. The first had been destroyed by Koutarou, and she was now about to fire the second. In reality, she had wanted to use this missile to return to her own world, but she didn't have much of a choice now.

“Fire as soon as it's ready, Clan!”

“At least let me do a final check!”

“I won't!”

“Fine, fine, I got it! Geez!”

The repulsion shell was already fully charged. Since Koutarou had said to use any means necessary, Clan had charged it beforehand.

“It's too late, no matter what you're planning! Just sit there and roll your thumbs!”

Maxfern boasted as he said that. He didn't know what Koutarou was planning or what Clan was about to fire. Convinced that it was too late for them to do anything, he let them try whatever they felt like.

“What are you trying to do, Koutarou-sama? What should we be doing?”

However, Alaia was different. She sensed something serious from Koutarou and Clan's behavior and asked him for instructions.

“Get down! There's going to be a big explosion!”

“I've finished inputting the target coordinates and parameters! Target has been locked! Here we go, Bertorion!”

“Fire!”

“Everyone, get down!”

“Fireeeee!”

The girls listened to Alaia and threw their bodies towards the ground.

The next moment, a missile as tall as her came flying out from the black hole. The rocket engine spewed fire as it headed straight towards the demons above Maxfern.

That's right, this is what it looked like…

The image of the rocket flying perfectly overlapped with his memory.

This surprised Maxfern and his subordinates.

“What!? Grevanas, what is that!?”

Seeing something unknown flying towards them, Maxfern questioned Grevanas. He believed it was a magical tool of sorts.

“I don't know! It might be some kind of weapon, but something like that can't possibly defeat all the—”

Grevanas quickly started his explanation, however, he wasn't able to finish it. The missile travelled faster than he could explain, and it activated the super-space-time repulsion shell at its target location.

The next moment, a large flash occurred and the horde of demons were enveloped in a gigantic cube. The cube didn't just extend to the demons, but also Maxfern and his party and the castle.

The cube only appeared for a few moments. It then suddenly vanished, taking everything inside along with it. The demons, the bottles they were carrying, Maxfern, his subordinates and even the castle behind them. After the cube had vanished, it left behind a giant hole, and an earthquake accompanied by a shockwave that felt like it shook the entire world.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Koutarou and the girls screamed. The barrier could block the shockwave, but not the intense earthquake. Everyone desperately clung to the ground. If they hadn't, they most likely would have fallen over and been hurt from the severe shaking.

“…D-Did it stop?”

However, it wasn't a real earthquake, so the shaking soon subsided. Koutarou hurriedly got up and saw a square hole carved into the ground. The acute angles on the hole told him just how powerful the super-space-time repulsion shell had been.

“Did, we do it…?”

“We did it, Bertorion! They've all been completely erased!”

The demons were nowhere to be seen, and neither were the bottles they were carrying. It had all been thrown out of the universe, and Forthorthe was saved from its crisis.

“No, not yet, Bertorion! Look at that!”

However, at that moment, Flair pointed towards the sky with a serious expression on her face.

“Not good! It looks like one made it!”

A single demon could be seen where Flair was pointing. It was still flying after being hit by the shockwave, though very shakily. And it was still carrying the bottle in its hand. Fortunately, the demon seemed to have absorbed most of the shockwave as the bottle was undamaged.

“We can't let that one get away! Hurry and—”

And as Koutarou was about to take to the skies and chase after it.

“Koutarou-sama, it's falling!”

“What!?”

The shakily flying demon suddenly began falling. The damage from the shockwave had been too great, and it had finally run out of strength.

“Oh no, the bottle will break!”

Of course, the bottle fell along with the demon. If it broke, the virus inside would spread, it would be the start of another nightmare.

No good, I won't make it!

Despite knowing that something terrible would happen if the bottle would break, nobody could reach it. The demon was too far off and Koutarou wouldn't be able to make it. There was no longer anything they could do.

The Silver Princess and The Blue Knight

“There is no need to worry.”

At that moment, something large blocked the sunlight and cast a large shadow on Koutarou and the others. Looking up, Koutarou was taken aback by surprise.

“Alunaya!? Y-You were still alive!?”

“You may be thankful for the fact that I am still alive.”

The next moment a white line of light shot through the sky.

It was the flame breath that Alunaya spewed.

The extremely high temperature flame burnt up the demon, bottle and contents all at once.

The Golden Sea and Silvery White Snow

Part 1

Alaia was crowned as empress and her coronation ceremony was held on a winter day, a few days after the New Year.

With Maxfern and Grevanas thrown out of the universe, the coup d'état naturally came to an end.

It was originally an incident that Maxfern and Grevanas had created behind the scenes, and with the incident cleared up, there was no longer anyone that would stand up against the royal family. The coup d'état army surrendered, and Alaia and the others finally returned to the imperial palace.

The month after that was incredibly busy. The collapsed political system had to be restored and the national forces had to recover after the civil war in order to keep the neighboring countries from getting any funny ideas. Though the coup d'état had ended, Forthorthe was still just a single country right now, so there were a ton of things that had to be done. Through the help of others, Alaia cleared task after task.

About a month after the end of the war, the country was starting to revive. By then, most of the disorder had stabilized, and the industries ravaged by the war were beginning to recover. Seeing her chance, Alaia announced her grand coronation ceremony to the citizens in order to give them hope. As a result, the entirety of Forthorthe was celebrating the hardest they had since the foundation of the country.

“…The scars created by the war still haven't healed. After a month, the country is finally starting to revive. However, I am not being pessimistic. I was only able to return here thanks to everyone’s help. So there is no way that the scars of this country can't be healed with everyone's cooperation. That is what I firmly believe.”

Alaia was giving a speech. A large crowd had gathered in the imperial palace's courtyard to witness her coronation ceremony. On her head was a beautiful crown made out of platinum and decorated with jewels. That was the proof of being the empress of Forthorthe.

Today, Alaia was becoming empress. Today, the Holy Forthorthe Empire's gears of history turned once more. The gears would continue to turn, and 1,000 years from now, the Forthorthe would reach the space age, and become a galactic empire. And in another 1,000 years, a lone girl would depart from here to the outskirts of space in a blue battleship. This day was the first step towards that. And at the same time, an ending was approaching.

Alaia stepped off the platform after finishing her speech and let out a small sigh.

“Phew…”

After her sigh, she took several deep breaths. With Alaia's weak constitution, the day of the coronation had a really tough schedule for her.

“Good work, your highness.”

As Alaia was breathing, Fauna came up to her. Fauna put her hand on her chest and her painful expression gradually loosened up.

“Fauna, I'm really glad you are here.”

“Please take care of your body. Your highness, no, your majesty, your body is no longer just yours.”

“Thank you, Fauna. Please continue helping me from now on too.”

The Golden Sea and Silvery White Snow

As payment for awakening Signaltin, Alaia's health had degraded. Because of that, Fauna would use spiritual energy from time to time to heal her. This was a secret between just the two of them; not even her own sister, Charl, had been told of it.

“Sister!”

And that Charl was now running towards Alaia, with Mary right behind her.

“You can't, your highness, go slower! Your outfit will come off!”

“It's fine! You're such a worry wart, Mary.”

Like Alaia, Charl was wearing a formal dress for the ceremony. However, she didn't care about that as she cheerfully ran. Meanwhile, Mary was worried that the dress would tear or come off.

“Sister!”

Charl threw herself at Alaia. Since she had entered her growth spurt, Charl had grown quite considerably in a short while. As a result, Alaia staggered when she caught Charl. However, since Flair casually supported Alaia, she didn't end up falling.

“Thank you, Flair.”

“Not at all, your majesty. This is my job after all.”

Flair showed a calm and gentle smile to Alaia and Charl.

She had lately become more feminine; this was most likely thanks to the war ending. Since she had the strongest sense of responsibility, she had stayed alert ever since the day the coup d'état began. With that now over, her original personality was now starting to show.

“So, why were you in such a rush, Charl?”

“Blue Knight isn't here! Sister, did you see him?”

Charl was in such a hurry because she was looking for Koutarou. Having gotten bored after the ceremony, Charl decided to go play with Koutarou. However, he was nowhere to be found, and so she had decided to ask Alaia if she knew where he might be.

“Lidith, what job was Reios-sama given?”

“Lord Bertorion hasn't been given a job today.”

Lidith shook her head when Alaia asked her. She was wearing a long robe that showed that she was a bureaucrat. Lidith was serving as Alaia's court lady. In modern terms, she was something like a secretary. And she was looking to become a minister, just like her uncle had once been. Her uncle had walked down the wrong path, but she sought to correct that.

“That's strange, he was here just a little while ago…”

Alaia could remember seeing Koutarou when the head priest put the crown on her head. She secretly wanted Koutarou to see her with the crown on, so there's no mistaking it.

“Hmm… Do you know, Caris?”

Charl asked Caris. She and Charl got along almost as good as Charl and Koutarou. So she was someone easy to talk to.

“I didn't see him in the dining room.”

Caris shook her head as she was chewing on some bread in her hand.

She was now one of few remaining magicians in Forthorthe. The court magicians had vanished alongside Grevanas. As a result, only the magicians out on missions remained. Caris was currently acting as their leader; she had now become the head of the court magicians.

The Golden Sea and Silvery White Snow

Alaia's policies had made it so that no new magicians were recruited. She had decided to reduce the number of magicians after Grevanas's violence. She was aiming to create a country that didn't rely on special powers or special people. So the court magicians would eventually disappear. However, Caris felt that was for the best. To her, magic not being needed was a proof of peace. Caris wanted her life of eating something delicious everyday to continue. For that to happen, a long-term peace was necessary.

“Hmm… Blue Knight, where did he go… does he really not want to let me ride a horse again…”

Where.

When Alaia heard Charl say that word, she instinctively remembered something.

“From an endless time and a countless distance.”

The next moment, Alaia started running.

“Sister!?”

Charl immediately chased after Alaia. She knew that Koutarou would be where Alaia was running.

“Koutarou-sama!”

It wasn't logic, it was just a hunch. But she had to go, because if she didn't, she felt like she would never see him again. And so she began running. She entrusted her body to the strong feelings inside of her and moved her legs as fast as she could. She had long forgotten about the coronation ceremony.

Meanwhile, Koutarou was on a small hill in the suburbs of Fornorn. Together with him was Clan, and a crimson dragon over 20 meters long.

“I see, so you two are heading home too.”

“Yes. We've already seen all the sights in this country.”

The fire dragon emperor, Alunaya was welcome into Forthorthe as a state guest.

Alunaya had been under Grevanas's spell and forced to fight. That was what the blue crystal had been for. And Alunaya had been set free from Grevanas's control once Koutarou had destroyed it. That's why it had saved everyone with its last flame breath. Alunaya wasn't a hostile dragon, but a peaceful one.

Having learned the truth, Alaia was deeply grateful and invited Alunaya in as a state guest. Fresh food and alcohol was brought in daily. Even bands and theatrical companies would come and perform. That was Alaia's way of thanking Alunaya, and at the same time apologizing for what Maxfern and Grevanas had done to it. Alunaya accepted Alaia's apology and became a friend of Forthorthe.

The Golden Sea and Silvery White Snow

However, after the coronation ceremony, Alunaya had decided to leave. Humans and dragons had their own lifestyles. Alunaya had things to do, so it couldn't remain here forever.

“Where will you go now, Alunaya-san?”

“To a new home. This world has grown colder, and it has become much harder for us to live here. That's why we have decided to travel to another world. The others are awaiting my return.”

“A different world… I see, so that's why.”

That had been the reason for why dragons had gradually vanished from Forthorthe. They hadn't died out, instead they had moved to a more comfortable world. The only dragons that remained were those with a low intellect, those who refused to listen and those who were against moving.

That was a shocking truth, but Koutarou and Clan both knew how powerful Alunaya was. And they too had come from a different world, so the two of them could easily accept what Alunaya had said.

“Where will you two go?”

“We'll go back to the future.”

“The future!? Fuhaha, no wonder you had such a strange smell. I see, I see, so this is the smell of the future.”

The same held true both ways, Alunaya was also able to easily accept that Koutarou and Clan had come from the future. They were all foreign to this world, so they were connected by circumstance.

“But still. If you aren't from this age then… I'll have to thank you as well.”

Alunaya believed its gratitude towards the people of Forthorthe had been destroying the bottle containing the virus. However, that wouldn't apply to Koutarou who wasn't from this world. So since Alunaya had a strong sense of obligation, it felt that it needed to thank him in some way.

“There's no need for thanks. If Forthorthe hadn't been saved, we would not have been able to return to our own world.”

“Kukuku… Then think of it as a proof of friendship.”

Alunaya laughed in a silent voice, and its eyes began shining green.

Then, a crest of a dragon's head was carved on the back of Koutarou's hand. However, he couldn't feel any pain. It was a special crest that Alunaya had carved using magic. If anything, it was similar to the crest on Alaia's forehead.

“This is…”

“This crest is connected to me. If you ever require my assistance, then speak your wish towards this crest. I will certainly appear, no matter how far apart we may be or how much time may have passed.”

“You really don't have to do this.”

“That's true. But in that case, just call me out to play before you die.”

“Would calling you out for such a reason be okay?”

“Like I told you, that's the proof of our friendship. Kukuku… now then!”

Alunaya spread its giant wings as it laughed and lightly flapped them a couple of times. That alone was enough to create a powerful wind that shook Koutarou's and Clan's hair.

“I believe it's time for me to leave. It's been fun, Blue Knight.”

“Likewise. Take care, fire dragon emperor Alunaya.”

“Attendant, you stay healthy too.”

“You've got it the wrong way around, Bertorion is the attendant.”

“Kukuku, you've been a funny lot ‘til the end.”

Alunaya flapped its large wings and flew up into the sky in an instant. The setting sun shone its light on the dragon's crimson body, and the red light made it look like the entire dragon's body was on fire. Alunaya continued flying and vanished past the horizon without looking back once. Alunaya lived up to its name and showed a powerful and dignified appearance as it left.

“…I guess it's time for us to go too, Clan.”

“Yes. We've stayed for quite long enough.”

Once they could no longer see Alunaya, Koutarou and Clan headed towards Clan's spaceship, the Cradle, that had been summoned to the hill.

“Still, in the end, the real Blue Knight never appeared…”

“However, history has been more or less corrected. With this we should be able to return to our own time and place.

“I hope so…”

Koutarou and Clan walked, shoulder to shoulder, their steps were far from swift. At first they had just wanted to escape from this age, but now they felt an attachment to it. And that feeling slowed them down. They just wanted to see the scenery of this age for a moment longer, to feel the wind blowing for another second.

“By the way, how are we going to get home? I heard you had found a clue.”

“Right now, the Cradle won't be able to fly into space. So I figured that we could use the ship as a literal cradle and sleep until the parts necessary to repair the ship have been produced.”

“Even if we sleep, we'll just die before that. Those parts won't be produced for another 2,000 years, right?”

“It's fine. By freezing the time inside the Cradle, time will be stopped for us, but continue around us. Of course, I'll need to do some adjustments first.”

“…I don't really get it, so I'll leave it to you.”

“Yes, yes. I'm always the one who has to do all the work…”

When they had first arrived in this age, they had been trying to kill each other. However, now it was like they had been friends for years. Their relationship had greatly changed since they came here. That's just how much time had passed.

And that wasn't just for the two of them. They had developed bonds with the people of this age. That's why they felt lonely. They slowed down even more. The two of them loved the people of this age.

“By the way… was it alright not to say your farewells to Alaia-san and the others?”

“Yeah. If I did that, my decision would waver.”

“I understand how you feel. I'm sure I'd just delay the date to return by a few days at a time, and end up never leaving…”

“So you have a delicate and cute side to you too.”

“W-What's that supposed to mean!? Haaa… Geez…”

The Golden Sea and Silvery White Snow

The time to leave had finally come. It was the moment the two should have been dying waiting for.

However, leaving behind the bonds they had formed was a truly sad event for the two.

Part 2

For the two of them to be able to sleep for 2,000 years, they'd need to use a place that wouldn't be disturbed for 2,000 years. There weren't many such places. Fortunately, Clan had a clue of where to find one.

Alaia had first gathered troops in the vicinity of a small fort in the Pardomshiha territory. And 2,000 years later that place would be known as 'Bertorion's special territory' and was very heavily guarded. After the war, Alaia had given that territory to the Blue Knight, and it was designated as a special territory that not even the royal families could touch.

In that area, Koutarou and Clan would be able to sleep undisturbed for 2,000 years. Neither investigations nor excavations would be held there. Though there had been talks about examining parts of the area on the 2,000 year anniversary of Alaia's crowning, but in the end, nothing was done.

Koutarou and Clan were now going to head to that special territory in the Cradle. Though it couldn't fly in space, some emergency repairs to let it fly through the sky had been made. They should be able to reach the special territory before the sun fully set.

“Bertorion, come up to the cockpit after you've taken your armor off.”

“I understand. I'll be there as soon as I'm done.”

After Koutarou had entered the Cradle, he had separated from Clan, who headed towards the cockpit, and had gone to the hangar. His job as the replacement Blue Knight had ended, and he no longer needed to wear the armor. So he was planning on removing it and getting lighter.

After entering the hangar, Koutarou walked to the area used for space suit maintenance. The devices there began automatically moving, and after determining what kind of armor Koutarou was wearing, it reached it with its arms and fixed it to a maintenance booth. After that, the armor opened up and Koutarou stepped out from inside.

“How convenient.”

After getting out of his armor, Koutarou turned back towards the maintenance booth. There was a lot of damage on the blue armor. Dents, scratch marks, burn marks and more. Every one of those wounds reminded him of fierce fights.

“You did well… thank you for your hard work.”

Koutarou mumbled to himself and lightly tapped the chest plate in appreciation.

Having spent this half year wearing this armor for most of the time, Koutarou had gotten attached to the it.

“I am honored, my lord.”

“Really, you're very well made.”

Koutarou smiled as the armor replied and he then removed the wooden insignia rank on its chest and the two swords on the waist. Those three items were something he didn't want to leave behind in the hangar.

“Alright.”

Koutarou put the insignia and the two swords back on himself and headed towards the hangar exit. At the time, he could feel the floor rumbling and at the same time he heard a loud noise.

“So we've set off…”

That was the vibration of the Cradle floating from the ground. After a while, the shaking stopped and the noise died down in the hangar. After lifting up a bit from the ground, the spaceship didn't shake at all. Now all that was left was to quietly fly all the way to 'Bertorion's special territory.'

However, as he was about to leave the hangar, another loud sound rang out. That was the call sound for the panel right next to the entrance, and the next moment Clan showed up on the panel.

"Bertorion. The farewell party has arrived."

As Clan said that, a hatch on the stern side of the hangar slowly opened.

"…Farewell party?"

The first thing Koutarou saw through the opening hatch was snow that had started to fall. Next he saw a meadow with the wind blowing through it, being lit up by the setting sun.

And when the hatch had fully opened, he saw a silvery and golden glow.

"Koutarou-sama!"

"Blue Knight."

That was Alaia and Charl, still wearing their formal dresses from the coronation ceremony. The wind blowing through the meadow shook their hair, and the setting sun made it shine. The Cradle had already reached quite a high altitude, but Koutarou would never mistake the two, as he would never forget them.

"Empress Alaia! Princess Charl!"

Koutarou held on to the handrail by the hatch and shouted at the two below him. As he did, their expressions brightened up and they waved their hands.

I see… so they came to see me off…

Koutarou was overwhelmed and no more words could leave his mouth. He just continued looking straight at the two who were waving at him. However as he looked at them, his vision was blurred as eyes began filling with tears. He wiped his tears away so he could properly see, but his vision was quickly blurred. Koutarou gave up on wiping away his tears and instead raised his voice.

"Goodbye! Empress Alaia! Princess Charl!"

Why couldn't he come up with better words to say? Koutarou was frustrated with his own stupidity. All he could say were simple farewells. But in reality, he had a lot of gratitude, friendship, and loneliness he wanted to convey to the two.

"Don't cry, Blue Knight! You're a man, aren't you!"

However, Koutarou's feelings were properly conveyed to the two. They wiped their tears away and they ardently watched as Koutarou was moving further and further away.

"Blue Knight! Play with me if we meet again! Stay well!"

Charl had been in tears when she understood that Koutarou was going home. However, now she was desperately making a smiling and seeing him off. An unbearable amount of tears streamed down her cheek, but Charl didn't care about that. She continued moving her small arms and waved at Koutarou. For each time she waved her arms, the tears scattered off her cheeks shone like beautiful jewels.

"Koutarou-samaaaa!"

Next was Alaia's turn. She spread her arms out and reached towards Koutarou, it was as if she was trying to embrace him as he was gradually moving further away. As she did that, she opened her mouth in an attempt to make her last words reach Koutarou.

At that moment, the Cradle's boosters activated, and a loud roaring sound occurred as the engines created a large amount of thrust.

“…”

Because of that, Alaia's words were unable to reach Koutarou. However, even if her voice couldn't reach him, he knew that they were words of farewell.

“…”

Alaia continued moving her mouth, with large tears flowing out of her eyes, and she reached her arms out towards Koutarou. Her earnest feelings most definitely reached him.

Just how grateful she was towards Koutarou.

Just how sad she was that the day of their parting had finally come.

“Empress Alaia… Princess Charl…”

That's why Koutarou desperately waved his arms towards the two who were getting smaller for each passing moment. That was the only way for his feelings to reach them now.

The rocket created a strong wind that blew over the meadow, and with the setting evening sun shining on it, it was like the meadow had turned into a golden sea. And then the silvery white snow began to properly fall. The contrast of gold and silver was a beautiful and fantastic spectacle.

Alaia and Charl stood there, constantly waving their hands as their hair fluttered in the wind. Neither words nor expression would reach Koutarou now. Waving their hands was now the last thing they could do.

While looking down at the two from the hatch, Koutarou was also waving his hand. Even after he could no longer distinguish them from the rest of the scenery, he continued, and continued waving his hand.

The bonds that had formed over these months would not be easily severed. Since he knew that their feelings were connected, since he knew that the girls were even now waving their hands, Koutarou continued waving his hand.

In front of him he saw a golden sea and silvery white snow.

And so, being held in a gentle, warm light, the legend of the Blue Knight ended.

The Last Scene to You

'The Silver Princess and the Blue Knight, Chapter 2'

The play being held in the Kitsushou Harukaze high school gym had reached the final scene and the finale was about to begin. The backstage workers who had been working hard all this time were now working their hardest on the preparations to make this last scene as good as possible.

“Where's Harumi-chan!?”

“She's in position! She can go at any time!”

“Has the lighting been changed to the evening color!? Don't make a mistake here!”

“Yes!”

“Where's Satomi-kun?”

“He's already gone up!”

They all strived together to make this the perfect finale.

The curtain on the last scene was about to rise. Harumi who was acting as the Silver Princess was standing by at the side of the stage.

“That's strange… what happened to me…”

With the last scene almost upon her, she was unable to hide her nervousness. She put her hand on her chest and took several deep breaths. However, that alone wasn't enough to remove her nervousness. Powerful emotions were welling up from inside and she was struggling to keep them under control.

“I should just do it like always…”

She hadn't been like this just before. During practice, she had no problems pulling off this scene. Her being together with Koutarou put her at ease.

“Why am I suddenly so anxious about meeting Satomi-kun… it wasn't like this a moment ago…”

But now, all of a sudden, Harumi was starting to feel anxious about facing Koutarou on stage. When she thought of facing Koutarou, her feelings ran wild. It's not like they had been in a fight, and it's not like she had a change of heart. But despite things supposedly being the same, she couldn't behave the same way.

“What should I do…? I-It's starting…”

Just a moment ago, she had felt security in Koutarou's existence, but now it was the opposite. It was like her feelings had turned inside out, and she was now feeling very insecure.

“Sorry, I was a bit late!”

At that moment, Theia, who was acting as the Golden Princess, arrived. In the last scene, the Silver Princess and the Golden Princess would see the Blue Knight off. It was a scene acted out by Koutarou, Harumi and Theia.

Theiamillis-san… she's already gotten into her role…

Harumi felt admiration for Theia as she saw tears streaming down her cheeks. Theia had matched her feelings with her role before she even got up on stage. And Harumi felt that was amazing.

If I use these feelings, I can…

The Last Scene to You

And at the same time, Harumi noticed that if she entrusted herself to the feelings overwhelming her, she should be able to perform well.

In the script, the Silver Princess could say her farewells to the Blue Knight, but she believed that she would be able to meet the Blue Knight again. So Harumi believed she could use the feelings inside her to portray that anxiousness well.

“Okay…”

Noticing that, Harumi began feeling a little better. She was still anxious, but she felt like she would be able to act.

“Harumi-chan, Theia-chan, please go! We're raising the curtain!”

That was when the drama club president gave everyone involved the go sign.

The curtain began rising and a red light shone down on the meadow set. And on the opposite end of the stage was a large stand, and Koutarou was standing at the very top of it. It was a scene where the Blue Knight was looking down towards the two from the top of a hill.

“Ah…”

And the moment Harumi looked up on Koutarou, all the anxiousness in her chest vanished. Just like it had with Alaia on that day.

When Harumi and Theia appeared on the stage, Koutarou felt like they were the real Alaia and Charl.

Harumi didn't have silvery hair, and Theia wasn't as small as Charl. There was also a big difference in the clothes they were wearing. However, looking down towards them from a high place like this, Koutarou was reminded of that day. It was such a powerful feeling that Koutarou felt like if he just left himself to those emotions, he would be able to return to that day.

“Reios-sama!”

“Blue Knight!”

And that feeling grew even stronger as he heard their voices.

“Koutarou-sama!”

“Blue Knight!”

Harumi and Theia began overlapping with Alaia and Charl. Even the name of Reios had changed into sounding like his own when it reached his ears.

Just what, am I seeing…?

That was an illusion that had been created by Koutarou's memories. Or it might have been Signaltin, hanging down from his waist, responding to his feelings. Nobody knew the truth.

“Empress Alaia! Princess Charl!”

The only thing Koutarou knew was that the words he had spoken, and the hand he was waving came not from the manuscript, but from himself.

I see… I really, really loved them…

And as Koutarou reconfirmed his feelings, the sight in front of him greatly changed.

Before he knew it, the stage had changed into the real meadow. The meadow reflected the red evening sun and had a golden sheen, and a strong wind was blowing. It wasn't just the sight, he could feel the wind and smell the grass. It was all the same as that day.

The Last Scene to You

The Last Scene to You

Pure-white snow was falling from above. The snow was showered in the evening sun and gave off a silvery sheen, creating a beautiful contrast with the golden meadow.

“Good bye! Empress Alaia! Princess Charl!”

Koutarou was no longer sure of where he was. Was he on the stage? In a dream? Or had he really returned? He had met with the people he never thought he would.

“Don't cry, Blue Knight! You're a man, aren't you!”

Tears naturally began overflowing from Koutarou's eyes. Charl was complaining about it, but Koutarou couldn't hold it in.

“Blue Knight! Play with me if we meet again! Stay well!”

Charl cried and waved her hand. Just like she had on that day.

That's right, Koutarou left Charl like this.

“Koutarou-samaaaa!”

And Alaia called out to Koutarou with a nostalgic voice, and a nostalgic smile. She spread her arms out and reached towards Koutarou, it was as if she was trying to embrace him as he was gradually moving further away. And she continued speaking like that.

“Even if we are separated by an endless time and countless distance—”

They were the words that the rocket on the Cradle had erased, and never reached Koutarou. And those words were now reaching him. Koutarou was incredibly surprised, and he kept listening to what Alaia was saying. While carving those words into his chest.

“—these feelings will always be with you!”

That was a message from the past that had travelled through an incredible amount of time and distance.

And with Koutarou and the others on the stage, the play ended in a storm of applause.

And after 2,000 years, Koutarou had finally learned what Alaia had said on that day.

Afterword

Long time no see everyone, it's the author, Takehaya.

This time I have managed to safely deliver Rokujouma no Shinryakusha!? Volume 8.5 'The Silver Princess and the Blue Knight, Chapter two' to everyone. I am grateful to everyone for picking it up.

The contents of this volume is a direct continuation of volume 7.5. It's the equivalent of the manuscript that Theia wrote in volume 7, and the second half of the legend of the Blue Knight, or perhaps it could be called the Koutarou arc.

There are several highlights in this volume, but one of the best might be the appearance of the dragon. The dragon is sort of a cliché in fantasy stories, but in a novel with some Sci-fi elements, they can't just be explained as existing for the sake of it. So the dragon had to be persuasive in the context to some degree. Because of that, the dragon was the hardest part in the novel for me to write.

In terms of biology, a creature like a dragon has a rather unreasonable body. There are two really unreasonable points, and that is that they can fly with their gigantic body, and that they can breathe fire.

There has been examples of large flying creatures on Earth as well, such as the pterosaur. Specimens as large as 10 meters have been found. So there are thoughts that dragons of that size would be able to fly as well, but that's not how reality works. In reality, Pterosaurs were incredibly light and they would only weigh between 20-30 kilos. Despite their size they would only be about as heavy as a large dog. That's what let them fly. But when looking at a dragon, one can't imagine them weighing below 100 kilos. With such a powerful, gigantic figure, they would weigh in the tons. And when looking at dragon bosses in games, they would quite clearly way above 20 ton. So with that, they would in no way be able to create enough lift with their wings to get off the ground.

And the other point being that dragons could breathe flames would serve as a reason that would keep them from being real. On Earth, there are creatures that could spew out chemicals with high temperatures. However, the temperature would only be around 100 degrees Celsius. When spewed, the creature needs to be able to withstand the temperature as well, so 100 degrees would be around the limit. A part of the creature's body would have to be able to create such heat, and the rest of the body would have to be heat-resistant. So the question is if creatures like that could naturally evolve. Thinking about it seems quite obvious that the chances for that would be very low. Adding to this there are dragons that could spew all kinds of things, from blizzards or poison gas, to electricity. In fantasy works, a large variety of dragons appear. So assuming that each of these dragons naturally evolved down different paths, and then coincidentally all appear in the same time period is a little bit too forced.

So, as I was troubled by this, I decided to make the entire species magicians. Their bodies aren't much different from dinosaurs, but they were born with strong magical power. Using that power, they would be able to fly and spew their special and powerful breaths. With that, I wouldn't have to worry about any biological problems since magicians already exist in this work. And from this, I reached the conclusion that intelligent specimens would be able to use magic like normal.

In a normal fantasy, I believe it's perfectly fine for dragons to have a flame sac or electricity sac. It would be fine if the god of that world designed them as such. Once Rokujouma is done, maybe I'll try my hands at a normal fantasy. I'm starting to feel like fantasy would be a lot of fun to write. Of course, that would be much later. Probably.

And I've just about run out of space, so I think I'll wrap this afterword up here.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to everyone at the editorial department, Poco-san for always drawing such cute illustrations, my friends for always going out with me for a drink when I get stuck, and to everyone who bought this book.

Then let us meet again in the afterword of Volume 9.

October, 2011 Takehaya